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Bass Guitar

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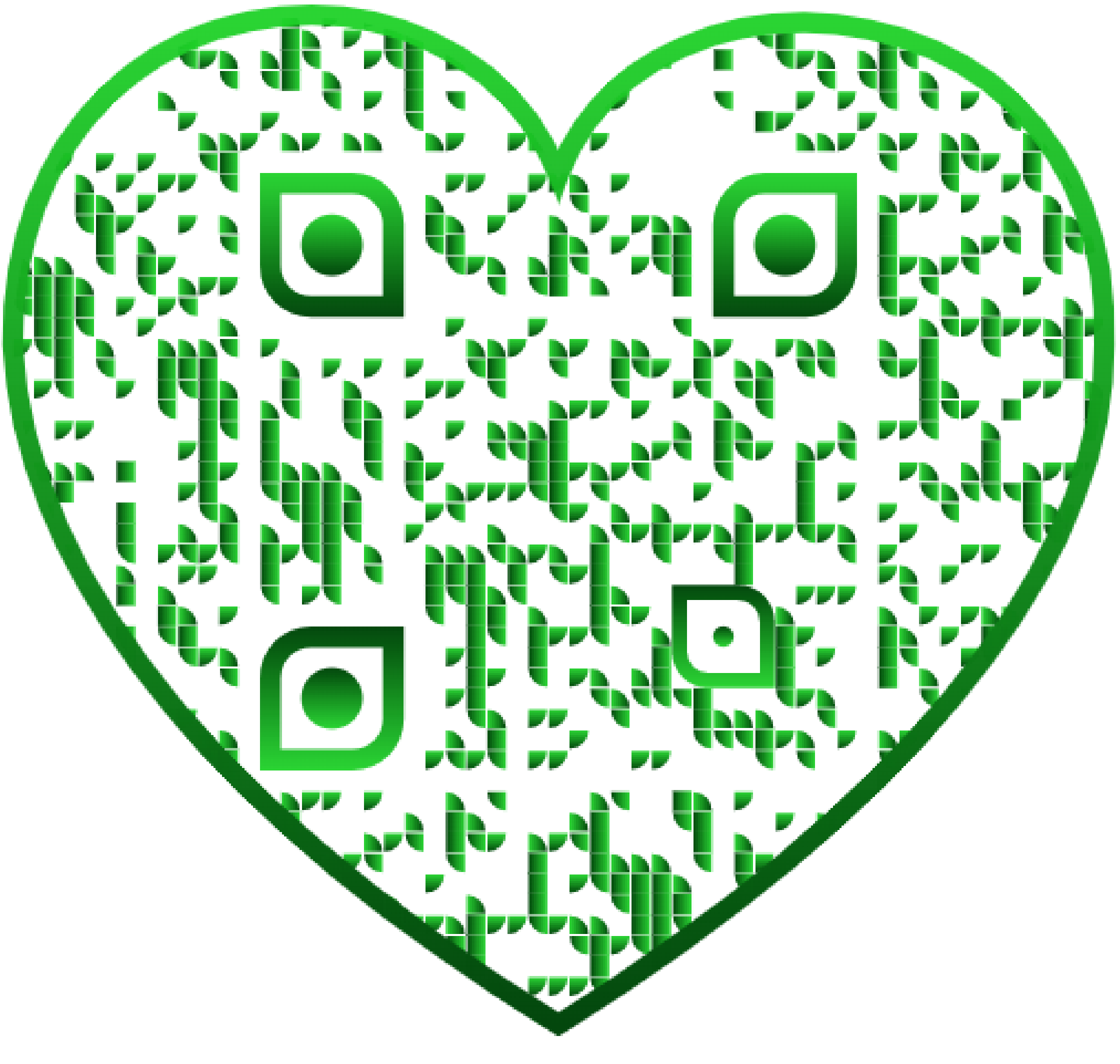

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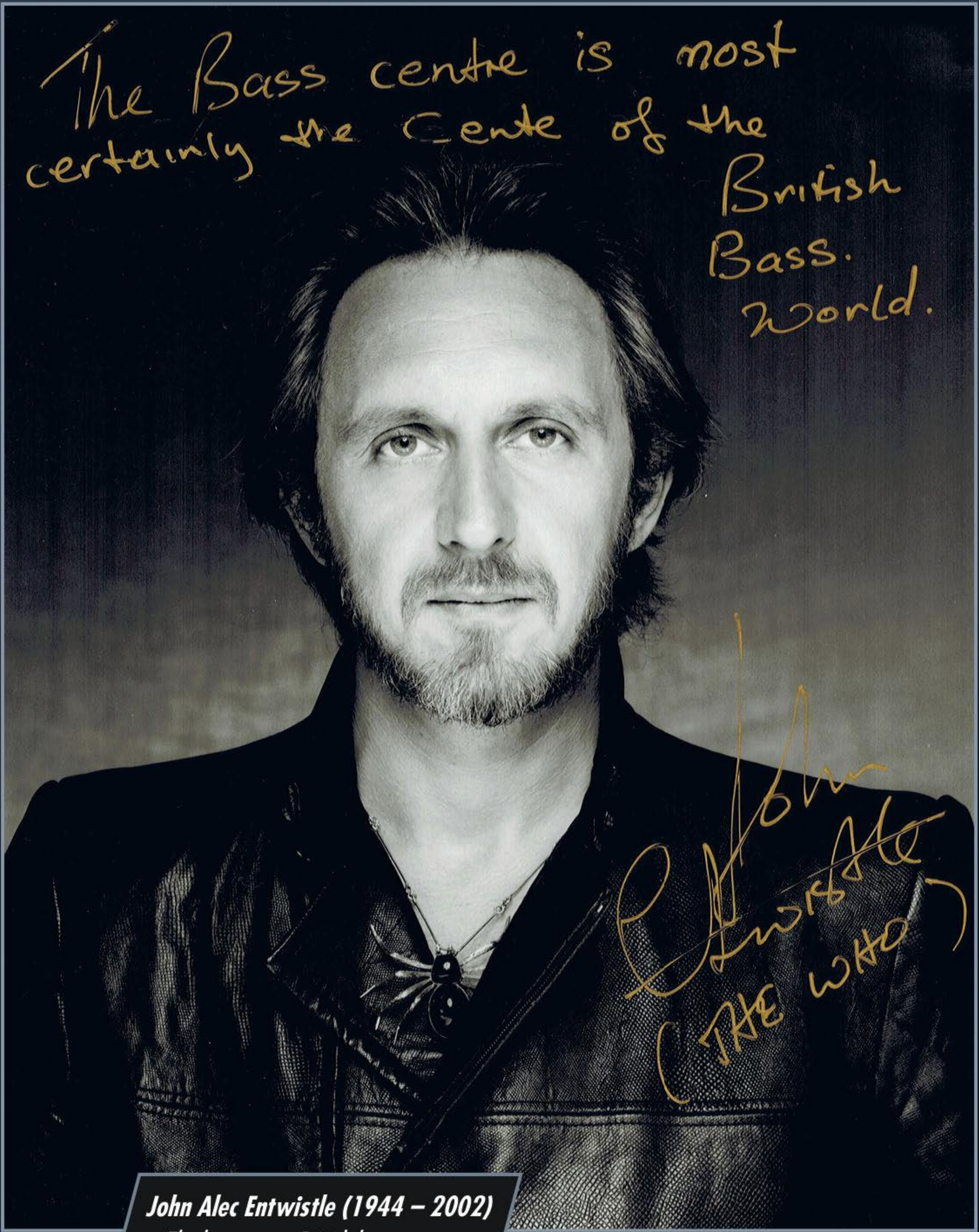

John Alec Entwistle (1944 – 2002)
The late, great, British bass master

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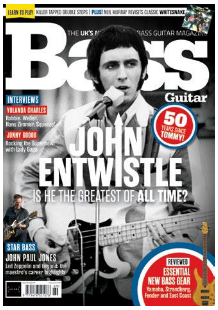

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Where were you when John Entwistle passed away in 2002? I hope you had a bass in hand, because most of us owe Entwistle a favour. Ever stood quietly at the back while your band showed off? That was his MO half a century ago. Do you play fast, melodically and loud? He was the king of all that. Did you record a pioneering, genre-shaping rock bass solo? Probably not – but Entwistle did. In this issue we salute the quiet legend, 50 years after The Who released the epoch-shaking *Tommy* album, with a look back at his life and work from writer Chris Charlesworth.

We strive to cover the whole bass world, so this month we've spent time with low-frequency stalwarts ranging from stage and session veterans Yolanda Charles and Neil Murray, via stadium-fillers Derek Frank (Gwen Stefani) and Matt Willis (Busted), to headbangers David Vincent and Becky Baldwin – not to mention the only former police officer to do the splits at the Grammys: Jonny Goood of Lady Gaga's band.

Looking for killer gear reviews? We've tested kit to suit all pockets, from a £159 effects unit and a £169 Eastcoast bass all the way up to Yamaha and Strandberg instruments costing almost 20 times more. And if you want to improve as a player, say hello to our bass teaching dream-team of Stu Hamm, Joe Hubbard, Steve Lawson, Phil Mann and Stuart Clayton.

Enjoy this issue – but before I go, stick 21 and 22 September in your diaries. That's when the 2019 London Bass Guitar Show will be shaking the floorboards at Islington's Business Design Centre. See you there!

Joel McIver, Editor

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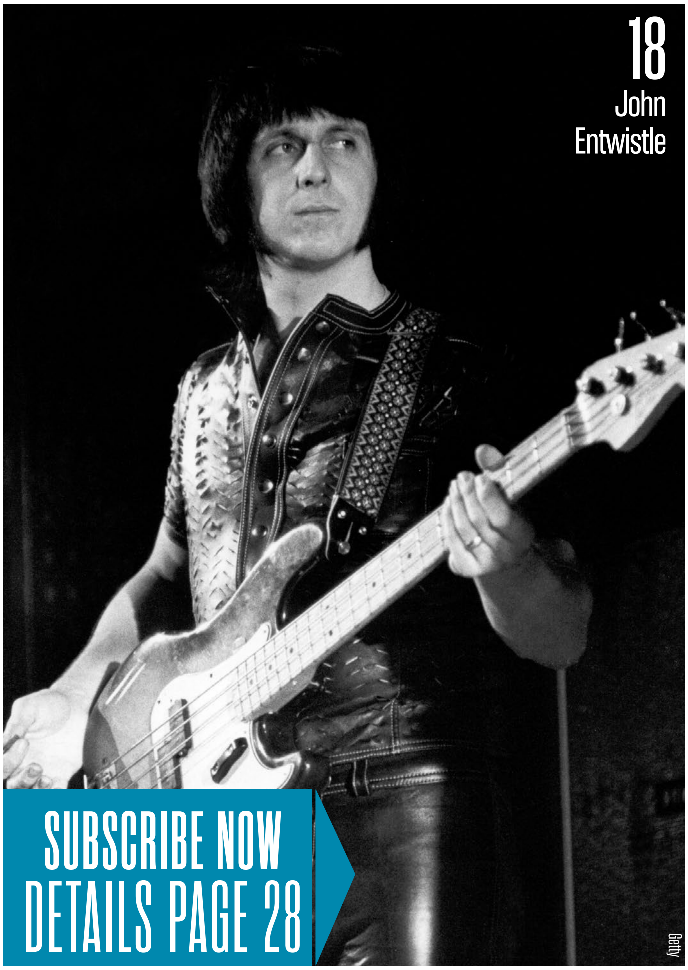

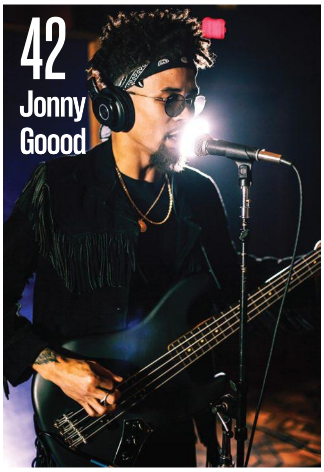

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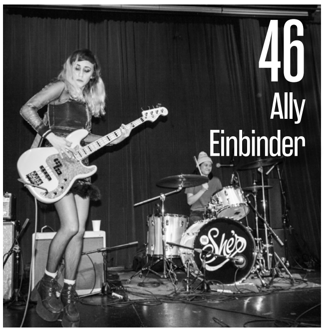

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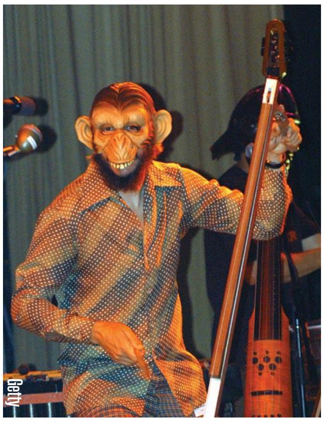
THE LOWDOWN

News and views from the bass world, collated by *BGM*'s team of intrepid newshounds

SLAY RIDE

Everyone's favourite thrash metallers Slayer are calling it a day, and to make this already significant event slightly surreal, Primus are slated to support them on some of the last dates of their world tour. If you know these bands, you'll know that the combination makes about as much sense as mixing Guinness with chicken soup. Talking to comedian Bill Burr, Primus frontman and Greatest Living Bass Player™ Les Claypool said "[It's] kind of a secret but maybe I can tell you now… it looks like we're confirmed, we're gonna play the very last run supporting Slayer's very last tour…It's starting at Madison Square Garden and ending at The Forum, that's the rumour." More to the point, it gives us an excuse to run this picture of Les in concert a while back.


Getty

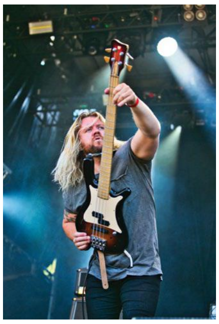
LOW-END LEARNING

JONAS ALMÉN, **ROYAL REPUBLIC**

Jaro Suffner

"There is a saying that goes practice makes perfect, and I do believe this to be true. But for me, it's not about practising scales up and down the neck to a metronome all day. Sure, that's fine, if that's the way you prefer it, but the best way to become better as a bass player, in my opinion, is to play with others and be consistent about it. You get more comfortable in your role as a bass player and you learn so much on the fly. That would be my number one piece of wisdom to teach. Just keep on playing and don't forget to have fun. I mean, we're the ones who bring the low-end to the show!"

COLIN PARKINSON, **TEMPLE OF ONE**



"A piece of advice I'd give to anyone is to love what you're doing. Stop it if you don't. Staying healthy and hydrated is essential, especially on the road. Plenty of water each day and a multivitamin work wonders. Learn about those midrange 'no-man's land' frequencies. They'll open your sound up and help you to cut through a mix. Never become too comfortable. Always challenge yourself. A P-Bass just works. Get one."

GLAM ROCKS

Sometime Prince bassist Nik West is having one of her basses customised by a firm called Fernandes Exquisite Creations, who have individually applied over 12,000 Swarovski crystals to one of her Fender basses. "The original bass was black, but because we know Nik loves purple, we transformed it into a stunning purple shade to complement the shade of Swarovski," says the company's Rebecca Fernandes. The company guarantees that the crystals won't come unstuck unless the item, in this case a bass, is used in an extreme manner, so if you choose to get this done, don't throw your bass into the crowd.

BASSWATCH

Every month, keen bass-spotter Ray Walker brings us an online bargain

Hofner 500/5 Stuart Sutcliffe Brunette Bass £1,695

Welcome back low-enders! On the block this month is the wonderfully vintage Hofner 500/5 bass. It's not quite the same model as the one that Stuart Sutcliffe, of Beatles fame, played, but this bass is inspired by the models of the 50s and 60s. From its fully hollow, 16.5"-wide body to its Hofner control panel, this beauty delivers that unmistakable 60s sound. Comprising a flame maple body with a spruce top, as well as a maple/beech/maple neck, this bass certainly delivers on its vintage promise. From the close-spaced original German Hofner Bar pickups to its 30" scale, this instrument is an excellent nod to an unforgettable era in bass.

BROOKS ON BASS

The importance of warming up and warming down is overlooked by many bassists, and it doesn't have to apply only when it's cold. Warming up your wrists, forearms, shoulders and neck, as well as your fingers, can provide significant benefits without you even knowing it. Not only does it reduce the likelihood of tweaks and sprains, it can actually make you feel better about your performance and it gets the blood flowing. If you have the time, warming up your whole body, especially for outdoor gigs where temperatures can fluctuate and big stages are the order of the day, can be worthwhile.

HOT TIP! Stretching seems to be the buzzword in exercise and it's relevant to the musician too. Nothing too physical is required, but some gentle stretching of your arms warms up the tendons and muscles. Post-gig, the reverse is true – so gentle stretching to warm down, particularly the hands and wrists, is advisable.

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LOW LIFE

Live performance expert at BIMM and Tax The Heat bassist Antonio Angotti on playing with confidence

Welcome back to Live Performance 101! This time around, I'm going to be digging into how we as bass players can be effective communicators on stage. This is often a skill that is taken for granted, as we communicate all of the time in everyday life and, therefore, we assume we're pretty good at it. However, in a live performance context, we need a heightened awareness of our surroundings to be able to connect with the rest of the band as well as with the audience. This will in turn lead to a more engaging and cohesive performance overall.

Firstly, let's address connecting with an audience. It's surprising how many performers put all of their attention into watching their fretboard or looking aimlessly at the floor. The former may suggest a lack of confidence in your part, while the latter comes across to an audience as if you're disinterested or introverted. My first piece of advice here is to project outwardly. This starts with good posture, making sure your shoulders are rolled back whilst employing a confident stance. Bassists such as Duff McKagan, Nik West, Tim Commerford, Jennie Vee and Gene Simmons are all great examples of musicians who exude that charisma – jump on YouTube and you'll see what I'm talking about.

Another approach to becoming an engaging performer is making eye contact with the audience. I appreciate that this can be quite an off-putting experience if it turns into an intense staring competition with people in the front row, so to avoid any awkwardness, I find that targeting several spots on the back wall just above the audience's heads is a good way of coming across as a confident performer.

The other side of being an effective communicator comes from our interactions with the rest of the band. Just as with an audience, if we're not looking up and giving our full attention, we risk disconnecting ourselves from the performance altogether. For instance, the more improvisational or spontaneous moments within your set will always need to be directed or led by someone, so watching that person will be crucial to making sure that everyone stays on the same page.

Your guitarist might decide that they want another 12 bars of solo (not again!) and if you're not observing, you'll end up ploughing straight into the next section in contrast to everyone else. As bassists, having a hand in both rhythm and harmony, we're well positioned to lead or MD ourselves – so nods, gestures and mouthed directions can help to get our intentions across. It's also worth noting that having a dialogue with your band before the performance will help to set contingencies as well as firm up any special arrangements such as specific endings, transitions or other arrangement considerations.

Most of all, though, look like you're enjoying yourself and really sell the performance to the audience through your ability to connect. Cherish those moments on stage with the rest of the band; for a lot of us it is an opportunity to play with our friends on a regular basis or with musicians that we really respect. Use it all as an opportunity to take the lead, to be led and to form an engaging experience for everyone involved.

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- Joel McIver
Bass Guitar Mag
April 2018

The revenge of all those trees that fell in the forest but were never heard

THE WOODSHED

Ace luthier Rob Elrick explains that your bass is also your antenna...

Hello and welcome! Let's consider shielding, the shiny metallic bling inside your guitar that provides just enough false confidence for you to plug in anywhere without fear of rebroadcasting local radio programmes. The protection which internal shielding promises to provide is a bit of a contradiction. Manufacturers showcasing their shielding practices via social media have, in recent years, contributed to some one-upmanship among builders. Unfortunately, the implementation of copper foil often appears to have its foundation in "monkey see, monkey do", rather than actual engineering principles.

To investigate the growing practice of over-shielding for this page, I consulted two engineers currently working in the music products industry (MI), Clyde Clark and Larry Pollack. Both have engineering backgrounds from outside MI. Larry is an electro-mechanical designer and has acted as a director of engineering, specialising in sensor and low-noise circuit design. He now manufactures music-related electronics and pickups as Aero Instrument. Clyde has worked in high-tech engineering, designing ICs, boards, and systems. Much of his career was focused on ensuring that critical-use devices such as mobile phones are protected from interference, and he is now the owner of Bartolini Pickups and Electronics.

Shielding is generally thought of as something intended to block noise from outside sources, like an amplifier, lighting, or other electric devices. This noise is called EMI (Electromagnetic Interference) or RFI (Radio-Frequency Interference). Not long ago, it's likely that any conversation about shielding would have been limited to the control cavity of an instrument. Today, however, it's become common to see builders lining pickup routes with copper foil. In many instances, this can be the beginning of one's problems. You see, a magnetic pickup is, in essence, an antenna. A conventional magnetic pickup creates an electrical current that corresponds to the movement of a string. This is accomplished by providing a magnetic field that, when disrupted by the movement of a string, changes.

The changing magnetic field creates a current in the pickup coil, but a changing magnetic field creates its current in exactly the same manner as an antenna. Installing shielding behind a pickup only blocks noise from behind the instrument – noise that would also have to travel through your body; it provides no protection from interference at the front of the pickup. Not surprisingly, this is the direction from which external noise is most readily received.

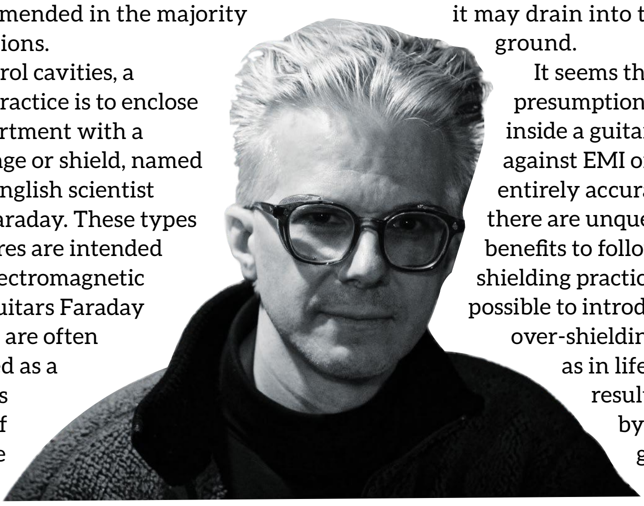
Now, this is where things get interesting. If that shielding does not provide a good connection to ground, it will actually behave like a satellite dish and reflect noise directly into a pickup coil. Most quality pickups are manufactured with internal shielding and reference voltage, and also provide a direct path to ground in order to keep noise out of the audio signal. When installed behind a pickup with a ground reference, supplemental shielding will almost always make any noise problem worse. For this reason, installing shielding behind a pickup is not recommended in the majority of applications.

For control cavities, a common practice is to enclose the compartment with a Faraday cage or shield, named after the English scientist Michael Faraday. These types of enclosures are intended to block electromagnetic fields. In guitars Faraday enclosures are often constructed as a continuous covering of conductive paint or copper foil, or in the case of a Faraday cage, a mesh of conductive materials. There is, unfortunately, a shortcoming to this method. While a Faraday cage is capable of blocking EMI noise from other sources, the shielding materials used in guitars is not particularly effective in the frequency range below 1 kHz. Despite the fact that it is generally thought of as having the ability to block noise, to be effective, shielding actually needs to act more as a reference than a shield.

Every electrical current has a mirrored current at a reference voltage. For electronics in a guitar or bass, that reference voltage is usually ground. The closer the ground reference is to the audio signal, the more immune it is to EMI. In most instances a guitar's shielding is really acting as a ground reference. It is not absorbing noise so much as acting as a reference, impeding the signal conductors from acting as antenna. To successfully accomplish this, any shielding needs to be well connected to ground and between the noise source and the instrument's electronics. That ground connection needs to terminate on the sleeve of the output jack so that it may drain into the amplifier ground.

> "TO BE EFFECTIVE, SHIELDING ACTUALLY NEEDS TO ACT MORE AS A REFERENCE THAN A SHIELD"

It seems that the common presumption that shielding inside a guitar acts as a shield against EMI or RFI is not entirely accurate. And while there are unquestionably benefits to following common shielding practices, it is also possible to introduce noise by over-shielding. In the end, as in life, the best results are achieved by staying well grounded.



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BASS OF TOMORROW

Andreas Neubauer has been putting his clients before his ego for the past 35 years. Hywel Davies chats with the Viennese master about his bass-building philosophy

Words: Hywel Davies

If you want a job done right, you have to do it yourself. For a lot of musicians turned luthiers, this is more of a mantra than a throwaway phrase. As a plucky 16-year-old bassist, Andreas Neubauer of Neubauer Guitars took this to heart, taking matters into his own hands – literally.

"Back in 1980, I was in a band and played a 1978 Precision," recollects Neubauer. "I loved that bass, but I was looking for a different sound, so I bought a Gibson EB-2 semi-acoustic bass with completely worn-down frets. I brought it to a Viennese repairman, but he was doing a hack job, so I decided to do it myself. This was the very beginning of Neubauer Guitars. I gradually taught myself to become a luthier over the next six years. At the same time, I started a four-year vocational training course to be a dental technician! I worked 24/7, all year round in both professions. Eventually, I built my very first professional bass in 1988 for the Vienna Art Orchestra bass player, Robert Riegler. It was a six-string with a super long scale. I'll never forget it."

Neubauer's philosophy is clear-cut: to create the best possible instruments for and by musicians. His understanding of his clients' needs cannot be understated, and it's as much a part of the creative process as the materials that go into each instrument. As he says, "My philosophy is simple: perfection in ergonomic design, playability, versatility and to create something truly beautiful. Being a bass player myself helps a lot, but what's more important is empathy for your customer when you're a bespoke luthier."

Working as closely as Neubauer does with his clients, no two of his instruments the same. Handcrafted from a range of local Austrian tonewoods, two of his models stand head and shoulders above the rest. "The Phoenix six-string contrabass and the Pegasus five-string are my latest models, and they are very important to me," he explains. "They have a unique way in which the neck bolts onto the body. I called it the T- Profile neck joint, which combines all the positive features and sounds of a neck-through and a bolt-on neck."

One such happy customer has stuck by his side through thick and thin. Colombian bass wizard Juan Garcia-Herreros, aka 'Snow Owl', is a proud Phoenix owner. "The thing about working with Juan is that he's highly professional," says Neubauer. "He just tells me his ideas, like the number of frets and the colour and so on, and after that, the rest is my business. I always have complete freedom in how I build basses for him. In other words, I always did what I wanted and he trusts that, because Juan isn't just a celebrated endorsee – he's my brother and a part of my family."

www.neubauerguitars.com

NO TREBLE

Kevin Johnson reports from the bottom end

No Treble readers were on a gear high this month, with loads of new equipment hitting the market. The most talked-about piece was the freshly unveiled Ernie Ball Music Man Joe Dart Signature Bass, which was opened to pre-order on March 1. It's something different from the company in order to suit the Vulfpeck bassist's 'less is more' approach to his rig.

Based on the Classic Sterling, the bass has an ash body in a natural finish and a beautiful flamed maple neck complete with a figured maple board. It's simpler in looks as well as function, because the bass is fitted with a custom passive MM humbucker and just a single volume knob. That means no active preamp, usually a hallmark of Ernie Ball basses. Dart certainly doesn't need it, as we can attest that any bass will sound funky in his hands.

While bridges may be an afterthought to some, the new bridge from Ray Ross Basses shocked many with its saddle-less design. Each string is held up by a tone pin that streamlines its plane and keeps it completely straight from the bridge to the nut. 'This concept removes the 'kink' from the string, providing increased vibrational energy through the strings and into the body of the instrument,' Ray Ross founder Aaron Ross writes. 'This feature allows maximum transference to the instrument so you can get the most of the bass itself, not solely the colour of the bridge.' A healthy debate on the merits of the design swept No Treble's Facebook page, so we're interested to see it used in the wild.

No Treble also remembered the amazing Jeff Andrews, who passed away at the age of 59. Andrews was a mainstay of the New York City jazz scene and one of the most swinging electric bassists of all time. His work with artists like Mike Stern, Wayne Shorter, Vital Information, Michael Brecker and more cemented his place in the history of the genre. His dedication to educating up-and-coming bassists was just as important to him. His impact will surely be felt on the music scene for generations. Until next time, keep grooving!

www.notreble.com

BASSCHAT

Silvia Bluejay opens up a can of WPAS

A recurring topic on Basschat is that of PA systems. Most of these threads appear in the Accessories and Misc subforum, which gives the wrong impression given the critical importance of PAs for bands who gig in small venues that don't have their own. It's often the bass player who owns and sets up the PA, probably because few others are willing to spend half an hour plugging cables and adjusting levels before each gig. Or maybe it's because we can go on Basschat to vent, complain and look for advice.

There's plenty of debate on all aspects of a PA. Is hoisting huge, heavy speakers onto stands really necessary, or are linear arrays with subwoofers at floor level good enough? Do we prefer real knobs, or are we happy with facsimiles on a computer screen? If we already use a wireless system for our bass, should we also consider a wirelessly-operated desk, and do the soundcheck from out front, or would that be asking for trouble?

I've been directly involved the discussion about wireless PAs. I am the ears out front at soundcheck and during gigs for the bands I work with. In other words, I'm the woman shouting and gesticulating at the guys on stage: 'That needs to come up!', 'Turn that down!' and so on. Surely there's an easier way… Cue some Wireless PA Acquisition Syndrome, and I'm now the non-shouting, non-gesticulating woman out front with a tablet. Not a proper sound engineer, y'understand, at least not yet.

I'm currently negotiating my way around volume, gain, EQ and effects, which are operated differently on a tablet and on a laptop – all that with advice and encouragement from more experienced Basschat members, and closely watched by others thinking of joining the club. The obligatory scary story involves the wireless system conking out mid-gig. Should we be seriously concerned? How many belts and braces can be applied to this case, before it all gets ridiculously over the top? Follow the drama unfolding in Accessories and Misc, and join in if you like!

www.basschat.co.uk

TALKBASS

Chris Fitzgerald considers constructive criticism

There are many opportunities to learn as part of an online bass community, from gear options you wouldn't otherwise hear about, to philosophical ideas about music – and everything in between. But in my 19 years as a member of the double bass forum at Talkbass, one of the most useful aspects of the interaction has been the chance to receive constructive criticism from others who see things from perspectives other than my own.

My online education began in the early 2000s when I was a much less experienced bass player. While posting on the forum, I happened to interact with more experienced players who challenged me on various subjects and made me question things in ways I had not yet thought about. I was fortunate to develop relationships with a few of these people that involved sharing and critiquing recordings of each other. Since this was back in the days when bandwidth was not so copious, much of this was done via snail mail and email.

I realise now that these relationships were essential to my growth as a musician. These generous people taking the time to review my playing in all aspects – good, bad, and ugly – had become online mentors, digital Yoda figures whose words echoed in my head when I approached bass practice and performance. Their critiques of my playing went well beyond 'Man, you sound really great' and into areas like 'Next time you are in this kind of situation, try this and see what happens', or questions like 'How does your role as a timekeeper change when the soloist does this'?

These extraordinary people challenged me to challenge myself to become a better musician. In the process, they showed how to critique without deriding, to question without insulting, and to confront without trolling. For this, I am eternally in their debt, and I hope to help spread their message in my next 20 years online.

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THEORY OF THE MONTH

Dorian In Fourths? No, not a Smiths song but Nik Preston's latest essential theory

Hello! By now, most of you will be aware that I'm not a great fan of practising scales purely for technique. I spent way too much time doing that in my teenage years, but soon realised that it was actually hampering my ability to create lines unless I practised with a context in mind – for example, how scales and modes relate to chords.

Sure, scales and modes can be great technique-builders, but obviously they have other uses as a harmonic and melodic resource. In order for us to go on and create lines, we definitely need to have practised the technical aspects of scales and modes, but many players practise stepwise (running up and down the scales in ascending and retrograde form) and maybe sometimes in thirds. They often don't progress to larger intervals and as such, don't develop the facility to create more angular lines.

Anthony Jackson is a great example of technical and stylistic versatility, and is a real exponent of lines made up of larger intervals. Scott LaFaro and Gary Peacock both developed styles that exploit larger intervals, more so than a lot of their predecessors, and soloists such as Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea really helped to popularise quartal harmony and phrases made up of fourths.

Our example this month is just the D Dorian mode, explored predominantly from the perspective of fourths. From a technical perspective it requires a lot of string-crossing. That's an important skill, but the primary goal here is fretboard familiarity. If we can become fluent in the construction of scales and modes with all intervals (fourths and fifths are a great start to help us progress past stepwise and thirds) then we have a far greater array of options at our disposal.

By applying this concept to all scales and modes, in all keys, we can unlock the fretboard at a far greater rate than we can by playing stepwise scales at break-neck speed. Don't get me wrong, we need to be able to do that too, at least to a certain extent, but many aspiring bass players that I know can already play scales considerably faster than they will need to in most contexts. However, they may not know their scales and modes in fourths, fifths, sixths and sevenths.

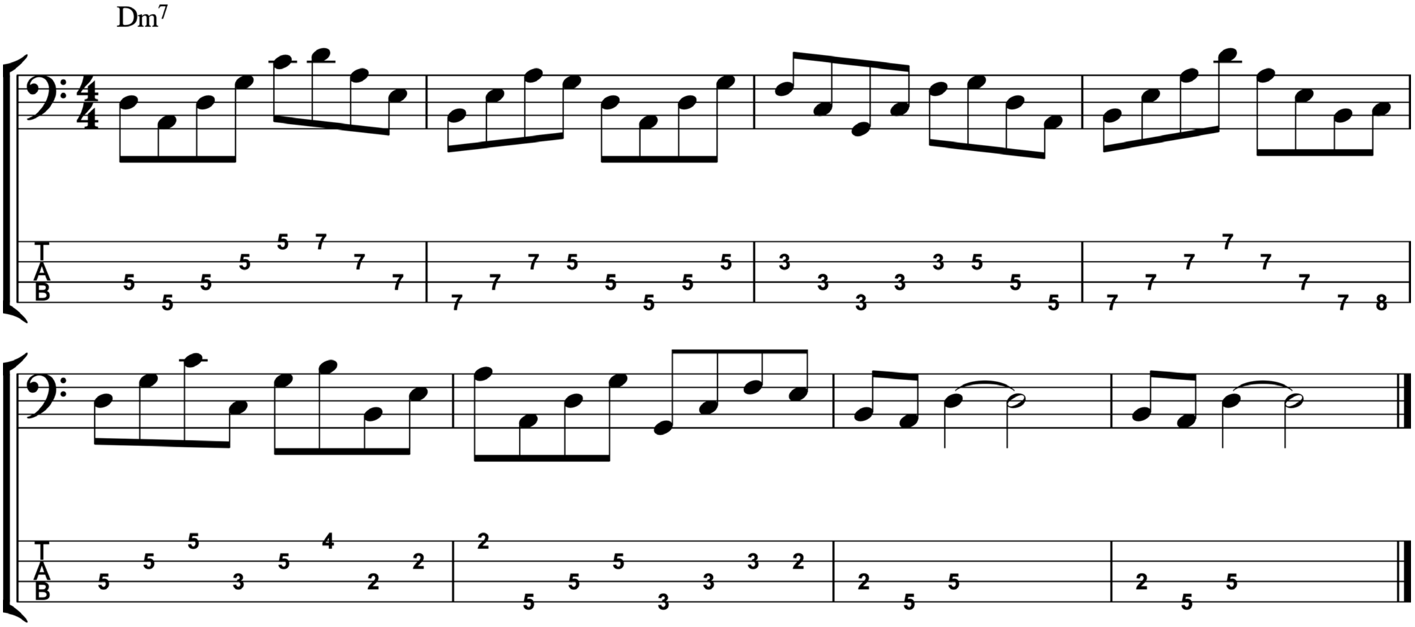
If we want to take this idea further still, I would practise it slow enough so that we can name the interval that each of the notes is giving us, relative to a D minor chord. This obviously helps our fretboard familiarity and knowledge of harmony, but can also help our aural skills too.

"BY APPLYING THIS CONCEPT TO ALL SCALES AND MODES, IN ALL KEYS, WE CAN UNLOCK THE FRETBOARD"

As is often the case in this column, this example is really just a taste of a concept that you can use to create your own drills and exercises over a range of different chords and contexts. Scales and modes need to be practised, but they need to be practised in a variety of ways and nearly always with the chord(s) in mind that they can be played over.

As always, take it slowly, have fun, and let yourself be inspired to create!

Example 1



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TECHNIQUE OF THE MONTH

Ecki

Welcome back once more to Stu Hamm's essential techniques page. Let's play some country, part 2!

Hello again, fellow bass clef enthusiasts! I trust that you've been hard at work on last month's lesson? Great! Let's move along and finish what we started, because this month I want to show you how to play the complete head, or melody, of one of my first recordings, a song called 'Country Music, A Night in Hell'.

I heard a lot of bluegrass music growing up in the heartland of the USA, and when I was a kid I used to watch a TV show called *The Beverly Hillbillies*. At one point during the opening credits, the soundtrack went into a double-time banjo riff, and depending on how much sugar I had eaten that day, my folks would have to peel me off the walls or the ceiling as I tumbled around the room. I was so excited.

> "I'VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO GET THAT NOTE… IF YOU CAN DO IT, THEN MY HAT IS OFF TO YOU"

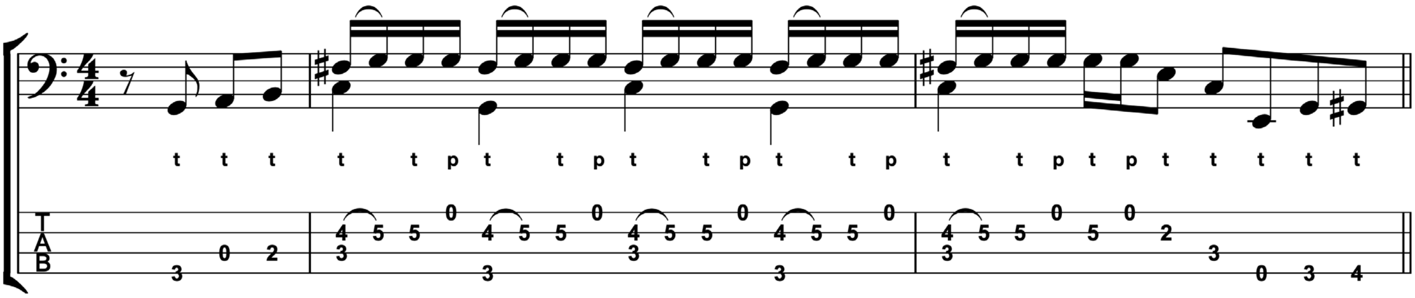
When I started slapping and popping on the bass – and back in 1975, believe it or not, not many bassists did – I came upon the fretted G/open G riff that has been the basis of my previous set of lessons. As I did so I heard the similarity to banjo picking, and the seed of an idea was planted, recorded and released on my first CD, *Radio Free Albemuth* in 1988. Heckling ensued…

If you've mastered last month's technique, you've already learned the most difficult part, so all we have to do now is fill in the blanks. It starts with a simple walk up from G to C, then we play the main riff that we worked on last month, and then we do another walk-up to get to the second main riff in the key of A minor.

You'll notice that I don't tap the low G on the second beat of bar 2. I've never been able to get that note to articulate clearly at a tempo to make it worth the effort, as the other fingers are now outlining a C major triad, whereas before they had just been playing the F#/G/G/open G riff. If you can do it, then my hat is off to you.

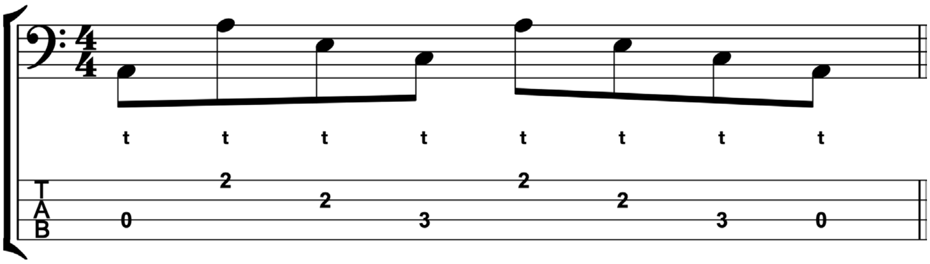
Learn Stu's dark bass secrets, but remember: with great bluegrass licks come great hordes of hillbillies in pick-up trucks

Example 1



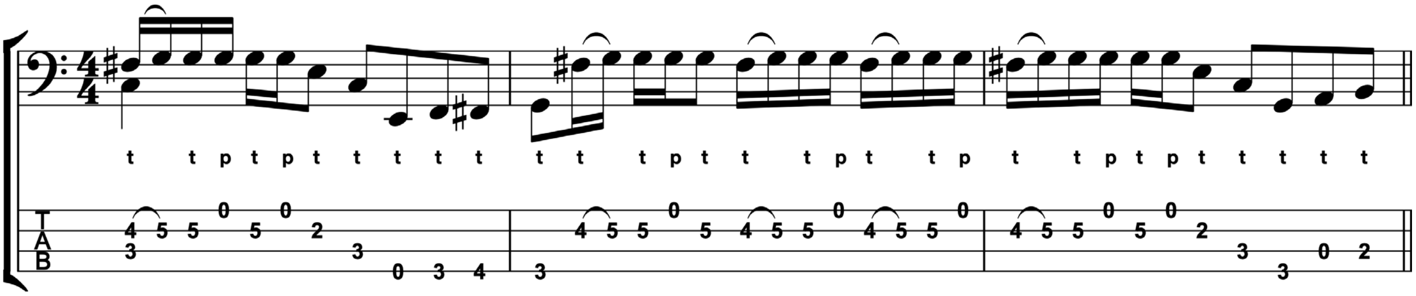
It can be helpful to bar across two strings, but it might take you some time to develop the necessary strength

Example 2



> **"TAKE THE TIME TO PRACTISE AT WHATEVER TEMPO YOU'RE COMFORTABLE WITH"**

Example 3



The second main riff of the melody outlines an A minor triad, from high octave to low. There are two tricky bits here, one with the left hand and one with the right. All of the notes except the first high A are all struck with the thumb of your right hand.

This happens rather quickly, so take the time to practise at whatever tempo you're comfortable with until it feels and sounds good and clean. Remember to keep your wrist nice and relaxed. The right hand is also doing something interesting here, as I'm using a technique that I often use when playing two notes at once. What I do is fret both notes with the same finger, making my finger a sort of capo. This takes some getting used to if you've never tried it before. The technique takes real strength to bar half of the fretboard like that, and also requires precision to do it cleanly enough so that the rest of the strings ring true without being muted by your hand or fingers.

The rest is easy *[For you, maybe! – Ed]*. We finish up with the main riff, this time ending with a chromatic walk-up to the key of G. Then the final variation of the main theme takes us back to the start.

Now put it all together, have fun, amaze your friends... and play something we can dance to!

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STAR BASS

Each month we celebrate the great — and rather less great! — work of an acclaimed bass player. This month: John Paul Jones

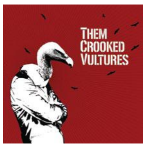
Words: Joe Shooman Image: Getty

A bona fide rock god, Led Zeppelin's John Paul Jones is also a legendary session player, with collaborations with REM, Peter Gabriel, Paul McCartney, Heart and Brian Eno under his belt. The multi-instrumentalist and producer can turn his hand to mandolin, pedal steel, keys, guitar and crazy hybrids like his three-necked mandolin monster. He's also a brilliant arranger – consider his orchestra-conducting with Foo Fighters at the 2008 Grammys, for example. As a bass player, his influence is mighty; everyone from John Deacon to Gene Simmons has given him props, and he was given a Gold Badge Award by the British Academy of Songwriters, Composers and Authors in 2010 for contributions to the UK music industry. Outside Led Zep he's released several solo albums, worked with Josh Homme and Dave Grohl in Them Crooked Vultures, and played with Seasick Steve on two albums and many live appearances. But it was those enormous Zeppelin bass-lines that first introduced us to his skills – and it's fair to say that they left an indelible mark on musical history.

MUST-HAVE ALBUM

Led Zeppelin Led Zeppelin II (1969)

Fizzing with pent-up energy, largely written between sold-out concerts and recorded mostly live in often-ropey studios along the way, *Led Zeppelin II* could have been a disaster. That it is one of the greatest rock albums of all time is testament to a group both hungry for mega-success and battle-hardened by constantly being on the road. John Paul Jones was using Rotosound flatwounds on his Fender Jazz at this stage, playing the strings hard and hefty with his fingers or a pick depending on the song. The iconic 'Whole Lotta Love' riff features open D and E to bolster the meat, possibly (as he did live) through an Acoustic 361 with an 18" folded horn enclosure. This is the heavy blues sound that finally killed off the Sixties; Jones, along with the rest of the band, absolutely nails it throughout. His signature low action can create a rattle, but he's said on more than one occasion that this is an occupational hazard. Jones would subsequently go on to use Rotosound Swing Bass roundwounds, and even Piano Bass Strings with an exposed centre core for his later multi-stringed basses – and a coin-thick 2mm pick!



WORTHY CONTENDER

Them Crooked Vultures
Them Crooked Vultures (2009)

This is a three-piece at the top of their game. Take 'Mind Eraser, No Chaser' for example. An itchy, syncopated guitar riff with doubled root note bass allows Homme and Grohl to share vocals before the pre-chorus, where a bubbling bass-line rises and falls. It's exciting as hell. Of course, Jones also brings his keys, vocals and other instruments to the fray, and his old favourite, the Jazz, reappears after 35 years on the bench. The innovator didn't stay old-school for long; in live appearances he played the Lapaphone – an eight-string, three-octave lap steel bass with a Fernandes Sustainer and a Hipshot tuning system switching between three tunings at the press of a lever. Over the top, arguably unnecessary, and inarguably bloody amazing. Check out the 2010 Fuji Rock performance of 'No One Loves Me, Neither Do I' to see JPJ and his latest toy in full flow.

COOL GROOVES

John Paul Jones
The Thunderthief (2001)

Jones treated his second solo album as chance to play as many instruments as possible, and took on production duties too. It's great fun trying to identify all the basses being used. We reckon these include JPJ's own Fender VI, plus 10 and 12-string custom variants, probably made by luthier Hugh Manson, a long-time associate of his. The album ranges from beautiful folk ('Down To The River To Pray') to rumbling swamp-rock like the title track, where the bass is locked in on the root with a DOA-esque riff. It's doomy and dark, with Cardiacs-esque time signatures and cross-rhythms. The Middle East-meets-Ireland ceilidh of 'Hoediddle' eventually slides into a basic, rhythmic bass-line under strings and synths. 'Daphne' brings Delta blues and a great middle eight where Jones briefly cuts loose on what could be an upright bass. 'Angry Angry' uses an electric bass mandolin. Astonishing.

WILD CARD

Seasick Steve
Hubcap Music (2013)

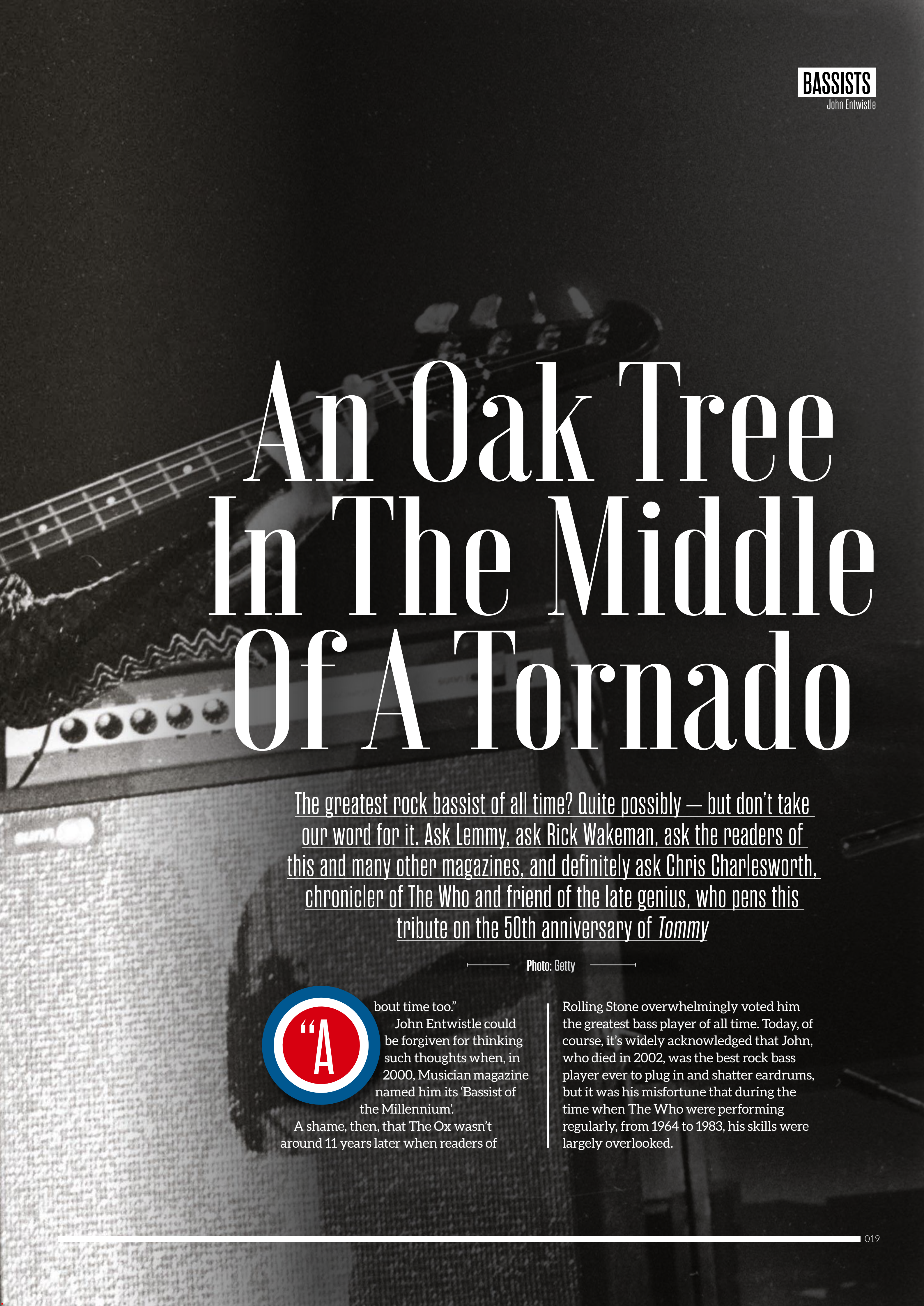
Steve Wold, a sessionist of some repute, hoodwinked a willing world into believing his persona as a dustbowl hobo under his Seasick moniker. He gets away with it because people love it: JPJ is no exception, playing on this and also the 2011 LP, *You Can't Teach An Old Dog New Tricks*. Jones's signature four-string E-Bass was created by Manson in 2010; the bassist always loved up-to-the-minute gear, and as an arranger/producer is bang up for the possibilities of new technology. In his earlier session days he'd be happy with an Ampeg B15 and his Jazz, as on Donovan's 'Hurdy Gurdy Man'. *Hubcap Music* harks back to those stripped-down times, Jones keeping it relatively simple. Check out 'Keep on Keepin' On' for some great little glissandi and high-register soloing, and head toward 'The Way I Do' for a pulsebeat underneath guest guitarist Jack White's minor seventh-heavy lead, brought to you from a midnight crossroads in a parallel-universe 1924.

AVOID AT ALL COSTS

Led Zeppelin
Presence (1976)

Before we get lynched by irate Zep fans, let's explain ourselves: *Presence* isn't a bad album. It rocks in a straightforward, in-yer-face way that recalls the band's debut. But it was born of difficulties: Robert Plant was injured in a car accident in Greece, forcing the cancellation of a planned tour. Plant and Jimmy Page decamped to Malibu to write instead, and the resulting LP was bashed out in two-and-a-half weeks. So far, so punk rock, although the 10-minute 'Achilles' Last Stand', with Jones on his Alembic eight-string, was longer than many punk bands' careers on its own. The stories are often better than the songs; 'Royal Orleans' had its genesis in an incident where JPJ shared a spliff with a drag queen, only to fall asleep and set his hotel bed on fire. Had that fateful crash not intervened, it's likely Zep would have gone into stratospheric exploratory territories – instead, the group suffered through a terrible last few years, personally and musically.

Cover art © Led Zeppelin, Seasick Steve, John Paul Jones, Them Crooked Vultures



An Oak Tree In The Middle Of A Tornado

The greatest rock bassist of all time? Quite possibly — but don't take our word for it. Ask Lemmy, ask Rick Wakeman, ask the readers of this and many other magazines, and definitely ask Chris Charlesworth, chronicler of The Who and friend of the late genius, who pens this tribute on the 50th anniversary of *Tommy*

Photo: Getty

"About time too."

John Entwistle could be forgiven for thinking such thoughts when, in 2000, Musician magazine named him its 'Bassist of the Millennium'.

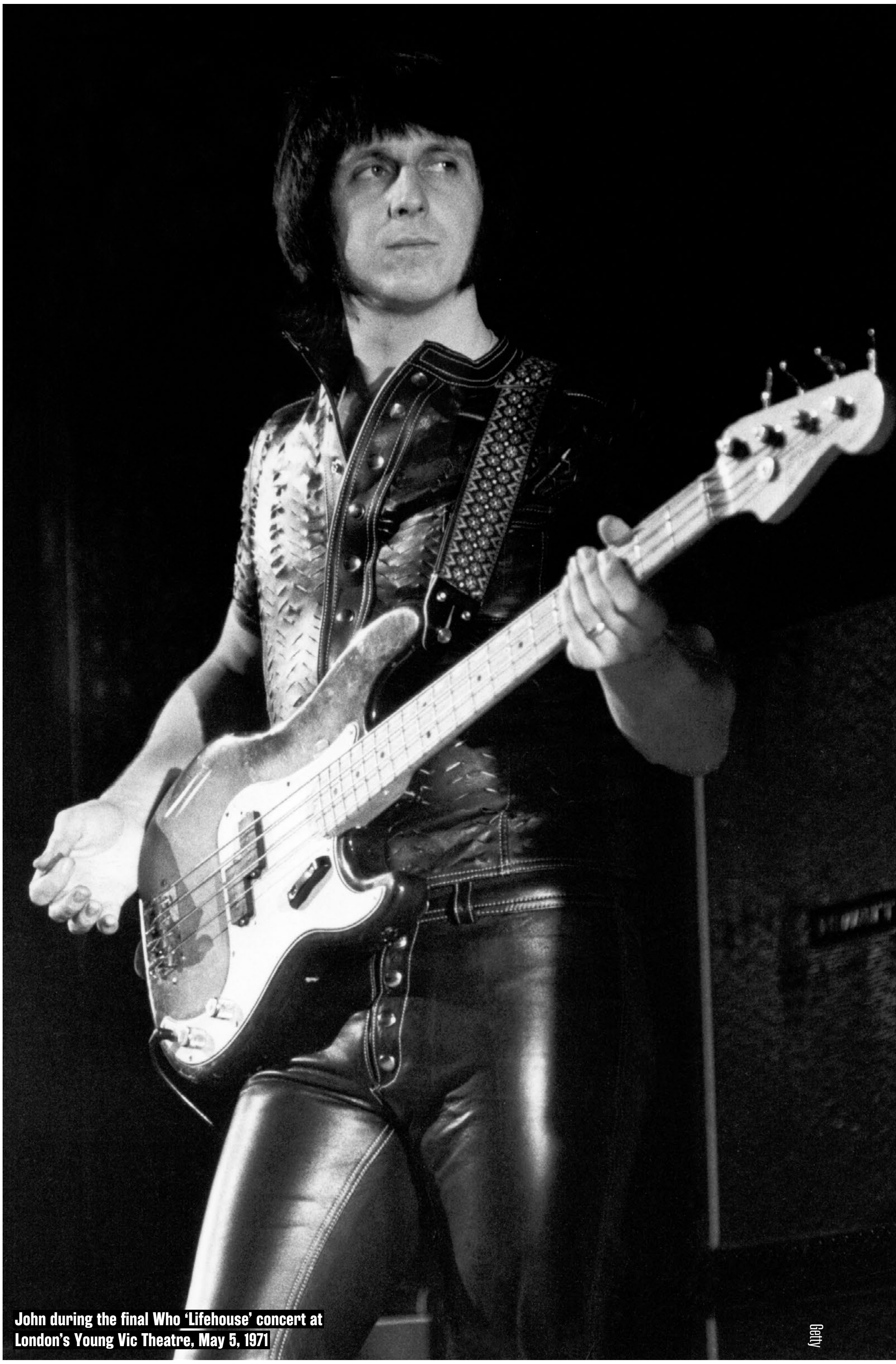
A shame, then, that The Ox wasn't around 11 years later when readers of Rolling Stone overwhelmingly voted him the greatest bass player of all time. Today, of course, it's widely acknowledged that John, who died in 2002, was the best rock bass player ever to plug in and shatter eardrums, but it was his misfortune that during the time when The Who were performing regularly, from 1964 to 1983, his skills were largely overlooked.

The golden era for The Who coincided with the release of their rock opera *Tommy*, 50 years ago this month. Although they'd already distinguished themselves on the concert circuit in both the UK and the US, this was the group's breakthrough in terms of record sales. In many ways it was a showcase for John, who not only played bass throughout but also contributed vocals, including lead on two 'nasty' songs that Pete Townshend requested he write for his rock opera, as well as French horn, trumpet and flugelhorn.

John soon makes his presence felt. In the 'Overture' to *Tommy* his French horn – the first solo instrument to be heard – takes on a melodic role in place of absent vocals, while in the indistinguishable instrumentals 'Sparks' and 'Underture' his repeated descending bass figure defines the structure, the rigid staff around which Townshend and Keith Moon can improvise. On stage 'Sparks' would become a *pièce de résistance* of ensemble Who playing, with the band's three instrumentalists reaching higher and higher towards block chord climaxes that characterised their style: the ringing open notes, the octave drops and wave after wave of escalating, bass-driven crescendos.

In 'Pinball Wizard', the best known song from *Tommy*, Townshend's furiously strummed intro is punctuated by the thunderous boom of powerful guitar stabs that John famously reproduced live by hammering down on his bottom string. The finale to *Tommy*, 'See Me Feel Me' with its turbocharged 'Listening To You' coda, is driven by rousing major chords while John's relentless, twangy bass acts as the foundation on which his three colleagues could rip yet another stage to pieces.

All of this, coupled with increasingly earnest accolades from his peers, ought to have raised John's profile as a bassist *par excellence* but in the period after *Tommy*'s release other players – most notably Jack Bruce, Chris Squire and Greg Lake – received many more votes in the 'Top Bassist' category of readers' polls conducted by *Melody Maker*, then the benchmark by which instrumental prowess was measured. Indeed, in the 1973 *MM* poll John doesn't even make it into the top 10 bass players.



John during the final Who 'Lifehouse' concert at London's Young Vic Theatre, May 5, 1971

Getty

"JOHN GOT ATTENTION SIMPLY BECAUSE HE STOOD SO STILL, HIS FINGERS FLYING LIKE A STENOGRAPHER'S, THE NOTES A MACHINE-GUN CHATTER"

Why was this? Well, despite my efforts as *MM*'s unofficial Who cheerleader, the paper gave far more coverage to Yes and Emerson, Lake & Palmer than it did to my favourite band, and Jack Bruce's stint with Cream gave him an edge that never went away. Furthermore, despite

his solo recordings John had the lowest of profiles within The Who. Overshadowed by the wayward but fearsome intellect of Townshend, the lunatic exploits of Moon and the craggy good looks of Roger Daltrey, John early on realised the futility of competing, of doing anything other than simply stand there and play, a low-key approach unlikely to earn him votes from magazine readers.

But I think there was more to it than that. John can best be thought of as a bass guitarist, perhaps even a guitarist who played bass, rather than a bassist. This distinction – which he made himself – is important. "I found bass very boring," he once said. "I wanted to turn it into a solo instrument and the only way to do that was turn up the treble." In another interview he even went so far as to say that The Who didn't have a bass player.

So it was that audiences never really appreciated what John was playing, because the sounds that came from his speaker stacks appeared to come from Townshend's guitar, or even a pre-recorded low register synthesiser. Coupled with the guitarist's attention-grabbing style – the leaping around and windmilling – not to mention the antics of Daltrey and Moon, no-one paid much attention to the chap on the left in the brightly coloured jackets who simply stood there and played. What they missed was a display of extraordinary but inconspicuous fluency, a player whose technique involved not just plucking his strings with his thumb and every finger of his right hand, but also tapping them and switching periodically to a plectrum, bending, hammering on and pulling off notes. He employed vibrating trills and unexpected bell-like harmonics, glissandos that travelled the length of his entire fretboard, parts that echoed or reinforced lead riffs and vocal lines, and even chords strummed across two or more strings that created an all-enveloping wash of low-frequency resonance. What's more, he made it look easy.

"John got attention simply because he stood so still, his fingers flying like a stenographer's, the notes a machine-gun chatter," wrote Townshend in *Who I Am*, his 2012 autobiography. "And through it all, as if to anchor the experience, John stood like an oak tree in the middle of a tornado."

After a break of seven years Townshend agreed to tour again with The Who in 1989, but he stipulated that because loud noise had damaged his hearing he would do so only if John significantly reduced his on-stage volume, a condition that required The Who's stage personnel to be substantially reinforced. With Simon Phillips now on

The soft-spoken star on the recording session for 'The Seeker' with The Who, IBC Studios, London, January 19, 1970

Getty

drums, they were augmented by a further 12 musicians, all to compensate for John turning down. "The only way we could add [John's] harmonic richness," said Townshend, "was to add brass, second guitar, acoustic guitar, two keyboards, backing vocals and people banging gongs, because that's what John used to replicate."

"He had a technique that was light years ahead of everybody else at the time," said keyboard player Rick Wakeman, who studied at the Royal College of Music. "Nobody played like John."

"Best bassist in rock'n'roll," added Lemmy. "No contest."

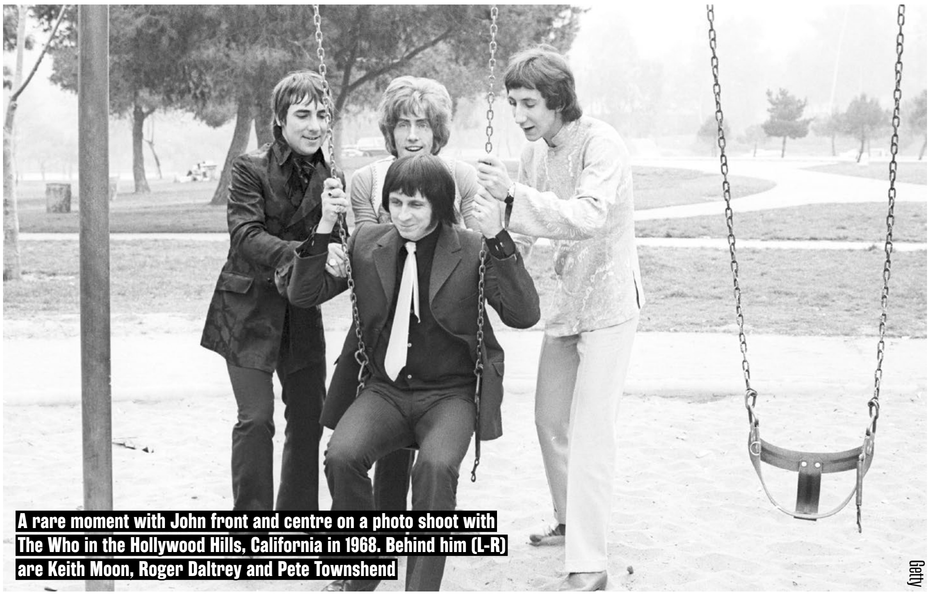
* * *

In the third week of December, 1972, I visited John at his semi-detached house in the west London suburb of Ealing, ostensibly to interview him for *Melody Maker* about his second solo album *Whistle Rhymes*. By this time I had edged myself into the role of *MM*'s unofficial 'Who correspondent' and charmed my way backstage at several concerts, so I knew him reasonably well. He was a friendly, down-to-earth man, quite softly-spoken and reserved when he wasn't performing, and he took compliments like a pinch of salt, wryly amused by his reputation as a disciple of the macabre; "big bad black Johnny Twinkle," as Moon once yelled on stage, to which Townshend added, "with the flying fingers".

John and his wife Alison welcomed me into their home. It was the kind of house you might expect a moderately successful businessman to occupy with his family, comfortable but not ostentatious, perfect for the character in The Kinks' song 'Well Respected Man'. Some wags within the Who camp were suggesting John should run for Mayor of Ealing.

"HE EMPLOYED VIBRATING TRILLS AND UNEXPECTED BELL-LIKE HARMONICS, GLISSANDOS THAT TRAVELLED THE LENGTH OF HIS ENTIRE FRETBOARD"

The house was full of curios: "part museum, part instrument store, part studio and part home," I wrote in *MM*. He had just bought a table lamp with those swishy frond-like tentacles that lit up at the ends and I'd never seen one before. Nowadays they're a bit kitsch but I was fascinated by it. Even more impressive was the first video recorder I'd ever seen, a contraption the size of the average microwave with lots of knobs, and cassettes like cigar boxes. John demonstrated it for me, and then took me upstairs to admire his collection of guitars and basses. Outside of a music shop, I'd never seen so many guitars in one



A rare moment with John front and centre on a photo shoot with The Who in the Hollywood Hills, California in 1968. Behind him (L-R) are Keith Moon, Roger Daltrey and Pete Townshend

Getty

place. He told me he had 32, which was nothing compared to the number he would eventually amass.

In 1975, flush with funds accrued from the Who's US success, John and Alison moved to a preposterously large mansion on the southern outskirts of Stow-on-the-Wold in Gloucestershire, about 85 miles west of London. Approached by a winding drive through trees and shrubbery, Quarwood was a gothic Victorian hunting lodge completed in 1859, with 42 acres of land, seven cottages and 55 rooms, its cantilevered staircase leading to a gallery where gold and platinum records were displayed floor to ceiling. Many of the bedrooms housed John's instrument collection which, in the fullness of time, would grow into one of the largest guitar collections belonging to any rock musician. Another was given over to his electric train set. Medieval suits of armour stood in the hallway where, dangling from a noose, was a stuffed effigy of Quasimodo eyeing the skeleton that reclined in an armchair.

Unlike the semi in Ealing, it was the epitome of rock star indulgence and although it seemed to me as it if it was permanently in need of a coat of a paint and a bit of building work, the master of the house was as proud of his chattels as any 18th Century Lord of the Manor. "My father loved the house and Stow," says John's son Christopher, who put the house and most of its contents on the market after his father's death. "Everyone knew him there but they gave him plenty of privacy and he was never bothered by anyone."

About 90 of John's bass guitars, among them several instruments that he had played onstage with The Who, were sold in 2003 at Sotheby's Auction Room in South Kensington, along with a similar number of guitars and many brass instruments. The sale, which also included Who memorabilia, stage clothes, antique chandlery and casts of game fish, raised about a million quid.

Watching the auctioneer's hammer come down alongside me were grieving fans eager to bid for a little piece of John Entwistle. In the last decade of his life they had seen him performing not only with The Who but also with bands of his own, and the lack of renown he'd suffered in the early part of his career was now a thing on the past. These loyal fans deeply appreciated not just John's immense skills as a musician but the touching allegiance he had always shown towards them. Within the Who fan community it had become well known that after both his own and Who shows, John would remain behind to socialise, happy to answer questions about his equipment, his playing style and The Who, and sign autographs for one and all. I cannot think of any other rock star of his stature who was more gracious to fans, the lifeblood of the music industry after all, than John, nor fans who appreciated this princely attitude so much.

> "LOYAL FANS DEEPLY APPRECIATED NOT JUST JOHN'S IMMENSE SKILLS AS A MUSICIAN BUT THE TOUCHING ALLEGIANCE HE HAD ALWAYS SHOWN TOWARDS THEM"

The last time I spoke to John was backstage at Wembley Arena after a Who show on November 15, 2000. The hospitality area was crowded with men and women far younger than me or the group and there was no sign of Townshend or Daltrey but, as ever, John was in the midst of the throng. Grey-haired and looking older than his 56 years, he was slightly tipsy I think, and when he saw me he offered a warm smile of recognition.

"I don't know a soul here apart from you," I said to him.

"Neither do I," he replied, laughing.

* * *

Thanks to the miracle of modern technology it is now possible for fans to watch John playing on two *Who's Next* songs, 'Won't Get Fooled Again' and 'Baba O'Riley', and hear his bass-lines isolated from the vocals, guitar and drums. These extraordinary clips, made available for the first time on a bonus disc with the 2004 reissue of the Who documentary film *The Kids Are Alright*, can now be found on the internet and have, at the time of writing, attracted nearly two million views for 'WGFA' and well over a million for 'Baba O'. John's now famous solos in The Who's 'Dreaming From The Waist' and '5.15' can also be viewed, as can bassists who demonstrate John's techniques.

Finally, a full length biography of John is due to be published by Constable in October. Written by Paul Rees, a former editor of *Q* and *Kerrang!*, *The Ox: The Last of the Great Rock Stars: The Authorised Biography of John Entwistle* is sanctioned by John's estate and features contributions from Alison and Christopher, his cousin and stepbrother, and John's second wife, Maxene, along with many from the Who camp, including manager Bill Curbishley and Who soundman Bob Pridden who operated John's studio at Quarwood. Rees also had full access to John's archives, including several chapters of an unpublished autobiography that John had completed.

About time too.

Chris Charlesworth is the co-author, with sleeve designer Mike McInnerney, of *Tommy At 50*, published by Apollo on May 21, for which Pete Townshend has written a foreword.

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15242 - Cort Jeff Berlin Rithimic 5 String Bass

Fender

18248 - Fender American Elite P Bass, Sunburst
18725 - Fender Am Elite Jazz, Sat Jade Pearl Met
18490 - Fender Am Performer Jazz Bass, Sunburst
18491 - Fender Am Performer Jazz Bass A. White
18492 - Fender Am Performer Jazz Bass Penny
18489 - Fender Am Performer Jazz Bass Surf Green
18493 - Fender Am Performer Mustang Bass, Sburst
18494 - Fender Am Performer Mustang Bass, White
18496 - Fender Am Performer Mustang Bass, Aub.
18495 - Fender Am Performer Mustang Bass, SGreen
18485 - Fender Am. Performer P. Bass Sunburst
18486 - Fender Am. Performer P. Bass A White
18488 - Fender Am. Performer P. Bass Penny
18487 - Fender Am. Performer P. Bass LP Blue
18246 - Fender American Pro Jazz Bass, Sunburst
16450 - Fender American Pro Jazz Bass, Natural
17076 - Fender American Pro P Bass, Sunburst
18300 - Fender Classic Series 60s Jazz L, OWhite
16298 - Fender Flea Jazz Bass, Shell Pink, Used
8927 - Fender Geddy Lee Jazz Bass in Sunburst
16448 - Fender Geddy Lee Jazz Bass, Black
16284 - Fender JMJ Mustang Bass, F. Daphne Blue
18784 - Fender Ltd Ed Ash Am. Prof. Jazz Bass
15686 - Fender Mustang Bass PJ, Sonic Blue
17091 - Fender Mustang Bass PJ, Torino Red
17101 - Fender Nate Mendel P Bass CA Red
18192 - Fender Player Jaguar Bass, Tidepool
18095 - Fender Player Jazz Bass, Black
18511 - Fender Player Jazz Bass, Buttercream
18244 - Fender Player Precision Bass, Sunburst
11069 - G&L Tribute L2000 4 String In Blueburst
18422 - Godin Shifter Classic 4 Vint.Burst HGMN
18423 - Godin Shifter Classic 4 Vint.Burst HGRN
11189 - Hofner HCT Shorty Bass, Black
12188 - Hofner Ignition Violin Bass, Sunburst
18369 - Ibanez SR300 4-String Bass, Purple, Used
16914 - Ibanez SR500 Bass in Brown Mahogany
17083 - Italia Maranello Bass, Black Sparkle
18208 - Italia Torino Bass, Trans Blue, Used
5216 - Marleaux Consat Custom 4, Bubinga
16731 - Marvit Apofi PJ4C 4 String Bass, Used
16236 - MusicMan Caprice, Heritage Tobacco Burst
18253 - MusicMan Stingray 4, Blue Pearl, Used
16149 - MusicMan Stingray 4 Bass with 3 EQ Black
15941 - Musicman Cutlass Bass, Heritage TobBurst
18114 - NS Design WAV4 Double Bass Trans Black
15106 - Orange O Bass Tear Drop Sunburst
6919 - Rickenbacker 4003, Mapleglo
18228 - Rickenbacker 4003, Midnight Blue
16421 - Rickenbacker 4003 Bass, Fireglo
7890 - Rickenbacker 4003, Jetglo
18078 - Rickenbacker 4003S Bass, JetGlo, Used
18077 - Rickenbacker 4003S Bass Guitar Mapleglo
18736 - Rickenbacker 4003SW Bass Guitar Walnut
18083 - Rockbass Streamer LX4 Fretless, Blk Used
18399 - Spector Bass Legend 4 Classic L.Fretless
16270 - Spector Coda Pro 4 Natural Stain
16681 - Squier Affinity P Bass PJ Pack, S.Burst
16567 - Squier Classic Vibe P Bass 70s, Black
18136 - Squier Contemporary Jazz Bass, OBM
17744 - Sterling by Music Man Sub Ray 4 Bass Red
17041 - Tanglewood TE4 CP Alpha, Copper
14778 - Vintage ICON V74MR Fretless, Sunburst
14490 - Vintage LV4 Lefthanded 4 String
14407 - Vintage LVJ74 Lefthanded Bass Guitar, Natural
14489 - Vintage VJ74MSSB Bass, Sunset Sunburst
18030 - Warwick Thumb 5 Bolt On, Brown Stain
6446 - Westcoast BG4 Neck Thru Body, Brown
8437 - Westcoast JP1 4 String Bass in Trans Red
5634 - Yamaha BB714BS Billy Sheehan, Lava Red
13138 - Yamaha TRBX304 4 String Bass In White
17877 - Yamaha TRBX604FM 4 String, Matte Amber

5 String Basses

16985 - Cort Action Bass V Plus TR Trans Red
15363 - Cort A5 Ultra Artisan 5-String Bass, Nat
14312 - Cort Action V-DLX, Cherry Red Sunburst
13803 - Cort B5 5 String, Tobacco Sunburst, Used
16526 - Cort GB75 5 String Bass, Black
18731 - Cort GB75JJ 5 String Bass Aqua Blue
16397 - Cort GB75JJ Amber Glossy 5 String Bass
15844 - Fender 5-String Jazz Bass, Blue, Used
15530 - Fender Deluxe Active Jazz Bass V, Black
13117 - Fender Deluxe Dimension Bass V Natural
16744 - Ibanez SR30TH5 NNF
16766 - Ibanez SR30TH5PII Premium, 5-String Bass
18254 - MTD Saratoga Deluxe, 3 Tone Sunburst
18843 - Marleaux Mbass Custom 5-String Bass
18844 - Marleaux Votan 5 String Vintage White
4920 - MusicMan Stingray 5, Black
16288 - Overwater Progress Deluxe 5, Pre-Owned
11196 - Spector Bass Legend 5 Classic Blk Cherry
15343 - Spector Bass Legend 5 Custom Bubinga
16329 - Spector Coda 5 Pro Black Cherry Stain
16773 - Spector Coda 5 Pro Trans Black
12406 - Spector Legend Custom 5 String, Amber
11195 - Spector SP5BK Performer 5 in Black
16776 - Spector SP5BK Performer 5, Black Cherry
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16800 - BLUGuitar Nanocab
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16052 - Eich 115XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
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16070 - Eich 212M Bass Cabinet
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16050 - Eich 212S Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16068 - Eich 410L Bass Cabinet
16067 - Eich 610L Bass Cabinet
16061 - Eich 612XL Bass Cab
16065 - Eich 810L Bass Cabinet
16321 - Gallien Krueger CX115 Bass Cabinet
16444 - Gallien Krueger CX210 Bass Cab
16320 - Gallien Krueger MB210 Bass Amp Combo
18368 - Hartke HyDrive HX410, Used
5476 - Mark Bass STD104HR (4x10)
6241 - Mark Bass STD102HF (2x10)
6242 - Mark Bass STD104HF (4x10)
5477 - Mark Bass STD151HR (1x15)
9033 - Markbass Traveler 121H Bass Ext Cab
9034 - Markbass Traveler 151 P Bass Guitar Cab
4733 - Mark Bass Traveller TRV102P (2x10)
16013 - Markbass 123 Alain Caron Bass Cab
16014 - Markbass CMD Combo K1 Alain Caron
17732 - Markbass Marcus Miller Cab 102
5431 - Mark Bass NY121 New York 1x12 Bass Cab
10412 - Markbass NY122 2 x 12 Bass Cab
10409 - Markbass NY151 1 x 15 Bass Cab
10410 - Markbass NY151 RJ 1 x 15" Randy Jackson
15272 - Markbass New York 122 Ninja Bona Cab
6259 - Orange OBC115 (1x15)
6260 - Orange OBC410H (4x10)
5241 - Orange OBC810 (8x10)
16856 - Trace Elliot 1x10 Elf Cab

Bass Combos

13577 - AER Amp III Bass Amp Combo
5627 - AER Amp One (200W, 1x10)
18515 - Ampeg BA210 Combo, Secondhand

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15187 - Ashdown AAA 300 210T 300w 2 x 10"
15189 - Ashdown AAA 60 10T 60w 1 x 10" Combo
17805 - Ashdown AAA EVO 100-BT
15188 - Ashdown AAA 120 15T 120w 1 x 15"
15953 - Ashdown ABM410 Bass Combo, S/hand
17803 - Ashdown OriginAL C112T Combo
17804 - Ashdown OriginAL C210 300 Bass Amp
15182 - Ashdown RM C112T 500 EVO 1x12
15181 - Ashdown RMC210T500 EVO2 2x10
5224 - Ashdown Tourbus 10 (10W, 1x6.5)

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12431 - Eden EC210 2 x 10 Bass Amp Combo
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
16046 - Eich BC112 Bass Combo
16028 - Eich BC112 Bass Combo

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4238 - Fender Rumble 15 (15W, 1x8)
12745 - Fender Rumble 200 Bass Combo
15113 - Fender Rumble 25 Bass Amp Combo
13083 - Fender Rumble 40 Bass Amp Combo
15114 - Fender Rumble 500 Bass Amp Combo
18724 - Fender Rumble LT25 Bass Combo Amp
17118 - Fender Rumble Studio 40, 1x10 Combo
16765 - Gallien Krueger MB110 Bass Combo
16445 - Gallien Krueger MB112 Bass Combo
16446 - Gallien Krueger MB150S/112 Combo

Mark bass

9004 - Markbass 121 Lite Alain Caron Combo
6239 - Mark Bass CMD102P Bass Combo
5472 - Mark Bass CMD151P J Berlin(300W,1x15)
5429 - Mark Bass Covers For Mark Bass Amps
6240 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P(300W, 1x12)
5474 - Mark Bass Mini CMD151P(300W, 1x15W)
5475 - Mark Bass CMD121H (300W, 1x12)
18371 - Markbass Marcus Miller CMD101 Micro60
18372 - Markbass Marcus Miller CMD 102 250
18370 - Markbass Marcus Miller CMD 102 500
9940 - Markbass Mini CMD 151 Jeff Berlin
16764 - Markbass 102 250 Richard Bona Combo
9938 - MicroMark 801 Bass Combo

ORANGE

15715 - Orange Crush Bass 100 Bass Combo
15716 - Orange Crush Bass 25 Bass Combo
15714 - Orange Crush Bass 50 Bass Combo
15111 - Orange OB1 300 Combo

Roland

4433 - Roland CB120XL Cube 120X (120w, 1x12)
4435 - Roland Cube 20XL BASS (20W, 1x8)
18035 - Roland Cube CB60XL Bass Amp
5678 - Roland Microcube Bass RX, (5W, 4x4)
16758 - Vox Adio Air BS Bass Guitar Amp
16470 - Vox VX50BA Bass Amp Combo
5422 - Vox amPlug-BS Bass Guitar Practice Amp

Bass Heads

15176 - Ashdown ABM1200-EVO IV 1200w Bass Head
14618 - Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 Bass Amp Head
15115 - ABM600 EVO IV 600W Ashdown Bass Head
15177 - Ashdown ABM600RC EVO IV 600W Rack
13131 - Ashdown CTM100 100W Valve Bass Head
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17779 - Ashdown CTM-300 Head
17012 - Ashdown Geezer Butler Signature Amp Head
17794 - Ashdown OriginAL HD-1 Head
17787 - Ashdown RM500 EVO II Head
14553 - Ashdown Retroglide 800 Compact Bass Head
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16319 - Gallien Krueger MB500 Fusion Bass Amp H
17147 - Gallien Krueger MB800 Bass Head
16339 - Hartke LH1000 Bass Head, Used
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14828 - Mark Bass Nano Mark 300 Bass Amp Head
10408 - MarkBass Bass MultiAmp Stereo
6243 - Mark Bass Little Mark III Bass Head 500w
9035 - Markbass Little Mark III Tube Bass Head
5244 - MarkBass Little Mark Tube 800, 800W
9256 - Markbass Big Bang 500W Bass Head
17254 - Markbass Little Marcus 1000 Bass Amp
17252 - Markbass Little Marcus 250 Bass Amp Head
17009 - Markbass Little Marcus 500 Bass Amp Head
17010 - Markbass Little Marcus 800 Bass Amp Head
9941 - Markbass Little Mark 250 Head Black
15271 - Markbass Little Mark Ninja Bona Head
9944 - Markbass MultiAmp
15151 - Markbass Randy Jackson TTE501 Bass Head
9725 - Markbass TTE801 Randy Jackson Bass Head
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Forward Thinking

After her stellar career with Robbie Williams, Paul Weller, Hans Zimmer, Squeeze and many other projects, Yolanda Charles is returning to her funk-heavy roots

Interview: Mike Brooks **Images:** Tina K, Maria Zhytnikova

We last met you at the Warwick Bass Camp, Yolanda. How was it for you?
It was really fun. I wasn't sure what to expect, although I've been around trade events before. They can be quite draining, and although it was full-on, it was still fun. It's such a privilege to hang out with people like Dennis Chambers and Alphonso Johnson, which, I have to say, I never imagined would happen in my life. When I was younger, it was like climbing Mount Everest, a different universe, and you could never imagine rubbing shoulders with the likes of these people. But over the years, as my career has progressed, I've become more qualified on the 'muso' scene, shall we say – and that has meant I've been able to meet, play and hang out with musicians of a calibre that I admire and respect.

You were teaching at that event – is that something you do a lot of?
I did my first bit of teaching back at college, I stood in for the bass teacher a couple of times. Then I found myself in the position where I could do some one-to-one teaching, and I had a nice run of private students. Then in 2006, I was invited onto a popular music course to do a masterclass, which I had never done before. It was terrifying, but I've progressed from there over the past 10 years to doing, for example, a three-hour solo masterclass at the Royal Northern College of Music. Nowadays I'm absolutely comfortable doing that. That Warwick session was great because I offered to do some sessions on syncopation, beat placement and timing and incorporated all three things into my classes. I'm going to develop my masterclasses now to incorporate all of this. I was always told that you can't teach feel, but I think you can, and I'm trying to formulate a way to convey it through exercises and approach.

> "I WAS ALWAYS TOLD THAT YOU CAN'T TEACH FEEL, BUT YOU CAN"

“I DON’T CARE IF I HAVE TO JUSTIFY MY ROLE. I DON’T AGREE WITH MUSICIANS BEING SET UP AS DEITIES OR PUT ON PEDESTALS”

A growing number of high-profile female bassists are coming through. Is that because any boundaries that existed for female bassists are being removed at last?
No, I don’t think they are being removed. The reason that someone like Divinity Roxx, Nik West and a few others are getting more of a profile is because of the amount of work they’ve put into their career. A musician may get breaks and get to work on great gigs, but after that things can slow down again if you don’t do your own thing, because there is so much competition. All bass players need some kind of angle other than just being a good bass player, and the women you’re referring to need to be very high-profile to be recognised over other bass players. They put a lot of work into their fanbase, making records, being seen, putting videos up and really putting some effort into that. The women have done great to get to that place and forge a career.

Are women being offered sessions, tours and recording work as often as the guys?
I don’t think they are. I think it’s still a man’s world in that respect. The way that female players are perceived – as not as good as the guys – hasn’t changed.

Do people appreciate what you’ve done, career-wise?
It depends. In the world of bass, people may know who I am – but outside of that, not many people know who I am or what I do. I was around doing the UK music programmes on TV before it all started dying out, but I wouldn’t say that being on TV helped me to get recognised. In session situations where I’ve been brought in by somebody, maybe the artist knows me, but the MD doesn’t. I still find myself having to qualify my position, and they reserve their judgement until I’ve played the notes. But I don’t care if I have to justify my role. I don’t agree with musicians being set up as deities or put on pedestals, because I’ve known too many musicians who haven’t had the opportunity or been in the right place at the right time to get those gigs which can make your CV look amazing. If I judge a musician at all, it’s by how they play. If it’s rocking and in the pocket, I’m happy. It’s not about what’s on your CV, it’s about touch, tone and good taste.

In recent years, you’ve toured with Hans Zimmer and joined Squeeze.
Working with Hans is absolutely fantastic. I was reading and working with clicks that had tempo changes throughout. If you can’t play in time with a click, you can’t do a gig like that. And for Squeeze, Chris Difford

dropped me a direct message on Twitter, and asked if I'd like to play on a new album, *The Knowledge*, that they were going to record. I assumed that that was a session, so I said yes – I say yes to every session! Then management contacted me, and Glenn Tilbrook came down to watch me sit in on a gig with Alex Skolnick at Pizza Express. He enjoyed my playing in that fusion setting, which I'd thought might be a deal-breaker. The next thing we were in the studio; they sent a few demos through, some had lyrics, some didn't. We went through these tunes and came up with our parts on the fly and recorded it live.

What gear did you use for *The Knowledge*?
Mentally I put my Paul Weller hat on and came down with my '65 Jazz bass, because it's the sort of bass that nobody seems to refuse – but I'd just got my Fender American Pro five-string and I'd been using it on the Hans Zimmer shows so I ended up using it for the whole album. Glenn said he thought the bass sounded incredible, and it did, plugged into my 800 watt Class D Fender amp and a 4x10 cabinet. They were happy so I was happy! Then for the live shows, I used my Super Bassman amp and an 8x10 cab. I'm a full Fender endorser and I also use D'Addario NYXL 45-130 strings. Once I was booked for the gigs, I realised that they don't really use session players – and then I realised that I was in the band!

You recently lost a lot of equipment in a fire at a storage facility in North London.
I lost both of my blue Levinson Blade basses, which hurts – but those basses were superseded by my active Fender Dimensions, which is why they were in storage. Thankfully, all the basses that I use were at my house, so I still have my Mayones Jabba which I use a lot and sounds amazing, and all of my vintage instruments. My 65 Jazz, I picked up two days before the fire. I lost five in total – the two Blades, my four-string Fender Dimension, my Sei bass that Martin Petersen made for me in 1993, and my semi-acoustic Fenix which I had had for 20 years – and which, having had 20 years of work on it, had started to sound so awesome.

How is the world of bass developing?
There's a lot of focus on playing abilities now, with lots of videos of chopsy playing which have, for me, less emphasis on beautiful, tasteful bass playing. This is probably a reflection of popular music having less bass guitar in the recordings.

All that creativity has to go somewhere! I've found that people don't have time to meet up and be creative, but I'm lucky enough to know a bunch of musicians who are willing to explore music with no outside pressures or financial incentives.

"ONCE I WAS BOOKED FOR THE GIGS, I REALISED THAT SQUEEZE DON'T REALLY USE SESSION PLAYERS – AND THEN I REALISED I WAS IN THE BAND!"

What does the future hold for you?
I don't really want to be another female, singing, slapping bass player, as it's got to a point where I'm less interested in singing and playing as a challenge – so I'm developing a project that's a bit different for me, involving my new band, Project PH, which has London dates coming up. I love my jam sessions at the Spice Of Life in London: musicians get up and jam songs from a prearranged list. I'm also working with the guitarist and composer Phil Braithwaite. There are Squeeze and Hans Zimmer shows on the way too. There's still plenty of creativity in me.

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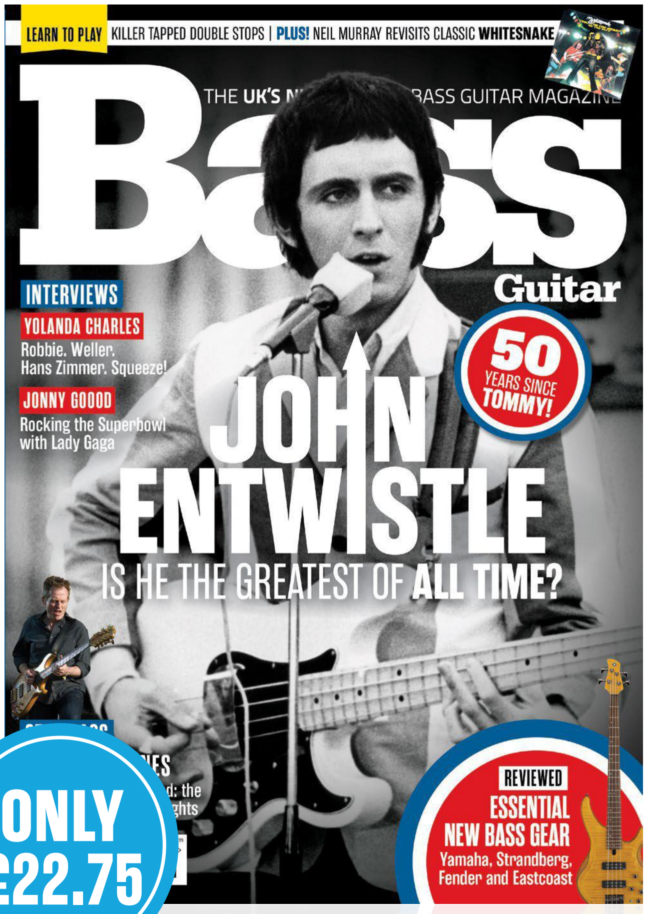

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“THERE’S SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS WHEN THE THREE OF US WRITE MUSIC TOGETHER”

Matt Willis (right) with bandmates Charlie Simpson and James Bourne

Matt The Man...

...not the boy, because no longer are the returning pop trio Busted a boy band. How exactly does a band — any band — make a successful comeback after a decade out of the public eye? Bassist Matt Willis lets us know

Interview: Rob Laing **Photo:** Olly Curtis

From 2000 to 2006, Matt Willis was a big deal in the world of pop music. A very big deal indeed. His band Busted, a trio also featuring Charlie Simpson and James Bourne, released a couple of albums and a lot of singles, and sold a ton of records, getting it all done just in time before the music business sank feebly to its knees and expired. After they called it a day in '06, Willis played in various bands and acted in *Eastenders*, as well as winning *I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here!* Busted reformed in 2015 and their third album, *Half Way There*, has just been released. What has Willis got to say about all this?

It's good to hear how high your bass is in the mix on the new album, Matt.
Totally! Gil [Norton, producer] is a real bass guy. I had a separate room next to the studio that I had a little rig in, because I had to practice. Without giving too much away, in the past we've been a bit, 'That'll do, we'll touch it up in the mix. We'll nudge that into place, that's a bit sloppy'... Gil's like, 'No fucking way. It needs perfect takes.' It's like the [new single] 'Nineties' riff, I played 36 times. Take thirty-fucking-six. I'd never played anything more than five or six times and my fingers were coming apart! He's old school, I love it and he doesn't fuck around. He wants feel and attitude. He doesn't want to hear any computers anywhere. That was really different to anyone I'd really experienced before.

If you say 'Busted' to people, they have preconceptions.
It's very fucking weird. First of all there's a perception that it wasn't real. I think that was the perception. And I think that was very strong and that people couldn't believe what was happening. That something could be so big that could come from three kids. I can understand why because if I saw something happen I'd be very sceptical. And I am sceptical of certain things. But it was real and it was happening. It was just really fucking successful and people couldn't really wrap their heads around that. It was a weird thing and it almost became a bit of a dirty word at times, Busted. It was awful to be in the band and have that.

Is it fair to say you're the punk element of Busted?
Yeah, I'd say so. Charlie was definitely all about metal when we met him, but he loved some of the American pop punk stuff as well. James has such an eclectic, weird taste but it's all really cool. If we write songs without the other two, it becomes about that person rather than about Busted. We've all done stuff separately and without saying anything, none of it's worked in the same way. There's something that happens when the three of us write music together and it becomes Busted. It's just something that happens and that's what I think this record is.

Are you worried that guitar music is being pushed out of the mainstream for a new generation?
I've written songs with other producers for other artists, but the thought of having to plug a guitar in, 'Fuck that – it's way hard!' And they're right! When you can pick up some sample sound if you're making a track, it's a piece of piss, right? You don't even need to play it, you can bring something in, press some buttons and it'll work. But it won't sound the same, feel the same, and it has no soul and no heart. But it does what they want it to do. If you plug a guitar in you've got to worry about tuning, getting sounds up... it's hard work. So I can understand why people are doing that in the current state of what music is. But I personally feel that I don't relate to any music on the radio whatsoever. I can't listen to the radio because I can't get anything from anything. I don't feel anything when I listen to the radio at all. I feel like we need a Nirvana now more than ever.

It's good that Ed Sheeran is encouraging young players to pick up acoustics, but it feels like there needs to be an electric guitar and bass equivalent.
It really does. We need a Nirvana now. We need something. I don't know who they are, wherever the fuck they are – maybe they're reading this magazine and forming bands in their garage. I really hope that they are. For instance I bought my son his first bass for his birthday in November. And it was the most amazing experience I'd had as an adult. It really was. I chose it and I tried really hard not to buy him a good one, because it's like, you can't have a good one yet. So I had to buy him a cheap shittier one! I thought, this is killing me but it's a rite of passage. But actually I played it a lot and it's quite fun to play. But he wanted a bass because his dad plays bass, which is cool but it's still in the corner of the room and I'm trying not to be pushy. But I found a kid locally who's going to give him lessons. Because I can't teach him. I don't want it to be like that, I want him to have his own thing. But he picks it up, he's only seven so he has no concept of it, but I really want him to take it up and love it. But I don't want to put him off by being too strong.

He has to want to play it.
He's got to want to do it, but then that worries me because I think about him; who in your world is influencing you to want to do that? Apart from me because I'm his

dad, obviously. He doesn't see anything that will make him want to do that. I was watching a BBC 4 documentary about the Clash the other day and I had it on. There was no interest from anyone else in my house in watching it. It made me so angry – watch this! This is amazing – you need to watch this!

Looking at your rig, you've also switched to Kemper like Charlie and James?
Yes, only recently. I used amps for as long as I could but the last album we made was quite different sounding, and we were travelling around Europe loads and it just made sense. I don't really know much about Kemper but I find it really great for what it is. If I'm honest I miss having an amp onstage. Really miss it.

So there is something for you in the need to feel an amp onstage?
Yes, there is a feeling. And I don't get that – my ears feel very disconnected, it's taken a lot of getting used to. And actually I strap a sub under me, under the stage built in under where I stand, so at least I get some feeling. Because I miss that, otherwise I feel I don't really know where I am. It helps but when we play festivals I don't have that, it's only at our gigs that I get that. I don't know what I'm going to do about that. But I might just put a cab there. We'll work something out.

What were you using on the album?
Gil was quite annoyed because I had loads of amps and never used them any more, so I brought them with me. I got the gear van to bring them all up, so I had three cabs and four amps. But it was a bit like, 'We don't need to be clogging up the studio!' I had to get rid of loads of stuff. For some of it we used a Mesa head, and the Fender Bassman for a bit of it and I think we used an old Ashdown.

Are any of those profiled on your Kemper?
For *The X Factor* we had to go on and they wouldn't let us play live. We had to play [the 2002 hit] 'Year 3000' with some contestants, so we went to the studio to record us playing it like we do now, because we couldn't bear to play the old version on television. So we went to the studio and used an old Ampeg head and Ashdown cab going through an Audio Kitchen preamp. We modelled that and it sounded fucking amazing. I used Audio Kitchen a lot. We were with a guy called Carl Bown at that point, who does a lot of metal stuff but is an all-round amazing producer. He got the sound up and PJ, my guitar tech, profiled it into the Kemper for

Put aside your preconceptions; this man's veins run hot with molten rock

me. We took that sound and it's the only sound I use now live. I don't want to worry about creating too many sounds. I want the bass to sound solid all the way through – I don't even change guitar very much, so I try not to change basses in the set. I've got a spare that's a copy of my main bass but it doesn't sound as good. It's exactly the same in every possible way but it doesn't sound the same.

What is that main bass?
It's a Fender Precision I had custom made. I played a Jazz for a while because I really liked the neck, it's really easy to play. And with a Precision neck I just found it made my hands really sore. But this was back in the day in 2002, and I've probably got better technique so I should be using a Precision neck now. But I just got used to it. I like the Precision sound so I have a Precision body with Seymour Duncans in and a Jazz neck. If I'm writing riffs, I've got a Fender acoustic bass in my house which I try to practise on because it's hard to play on, so when I put my electric bass on it's easy.

How would you describe your core bass tone?
We call it 'butter' – on my Kemper it's programmed as butter. It's very smooth, very solid. Then I've got a distorted sound which I use very rarely, that's much more aggressive and very pick-heavy. I used a Big Muff on the record for a distorted sound.

Bass is your one love, then?
Yeah – but it took me a long time to love it, if I'm honest. When we formed Busted me and James played guitar. I was terrible. I learned to play 'Wonderwall' and stuff. Then we met Charlie who was better at guitar than both of us by a long way, and we thought, well we can't be the three amigos. One of you has got to play bass – so it was like, right the worst player has got to play bass. They gave me a bass. So that's how I started playing bass but I didn't like playing bass at first – it was hard. It was *really* hard. I found it so hard to sing and play. When Busted first started I'd only been playing for bass like four or five months and I was really bad, it was really hard to play and sing – but we wrote all these songs and everything was going really well. I was 17 and had only been playing guitar for three years. Then we were playing the Hammersmith Apollo.

That must have been crazy.
It was mental. I was really stumbling along with this instrument, really. It's only over the last kind of six years that I really took practising seriously, and warming up. That made such a difference. I never would have thought that warming up would make such a difference to my playing. I had loads of people help me and in [short-lived supergroup] McBusted, me and Dougie [Poynter, McFly bassist] both played bass in that. Which was fucking weird – you don't need two bass players in a band, ever! We had to work out a way of us both playing, and we spent quite a while working on that. But that was really good because having another bass player around all the time really pushed me as a player. It made me feel I really want to be as great as I possibly can be. ■

Half Way There is out now on East West.
Info: www.busted.com.

Star Destroyer

What do you get when you mix a punk, a metalhead and dangerously high sugar content? Bassist and devoted headbanger Becky Baldwin reveals the answer

Interview: Hywel Davies **Photo:** Mike Brumby

"My parents bought me my first bass for my 13th birthday. Every day at school at every break, I would just be playing bass. It became an obsession rather than just an interest or a bit of fun."

Sometimes all it takes is one hit of the E-string and it's love for life. Using the lower register as her own personal punchbag for bands including Triaxis, Fury, Dorja and Hands Off Gretel, it doesn't take a genius to guess that Becky Baldwin is most definitely of the metal and punk persuasion. This is reinforced by her affection towards Rickenbackers, itself the choice of the two greatest metal icons to have ever played the instrument.

"Lemmy Kilmister of Motörhead and Cliff Burton of Metallica are the reason why I started playing Rickenbackers," she says. "I saw their playing, and straight away they became my favourite players. I didn't really know a lot about tone back then – I just thought that Rickys looked cool and I loved the people playing them. My other bass is a Fender Jazz, and the tones are different but you can get a good punch from both. I use D'Addario NYXL strings on both of them."

"DON'T GET A CHEAP FIVE-STRING LIKE I DID!"

On that note, her sound has an uncompressed bite. How does she cut through the blitzkrieg of guitars in her various bands, we wonder? "For my latest project Hands Off Gretel, I use an MXR overdrive pedal, which is actually a guitar overdrive," she explains. "It brings in more of the top end and the sound as a whole, which works out better than, say, having a Big Muff or some kind of fuzz effect that sounds a bit inaudible. All of that runs into a Sansamp and then into a GR Bass Pure Sound head. "

Although Baldwin is fluent in both four- and five-string instruments, it's the latter that have proved trickiest to wrangle. "When I first got a five-string, I really couldn't get on with it. I hated that low string; I always thought it sounded rubbish," she chuckles. "If you get a five-string, get a good one, not a cheap one, like I did! I got used to it quite quickly because I had previously played some electric guitar, but it still felt as if that low string should be an E. Once you flip that around in your head, then it starts making sense and will feel pretty natural."

IDestroy's video for their single 'Lemons' showcases Baldwin in full rock mode. Although she's since moved on from the trio, this two-and-a-half-minute sugar rush of soft drink carnage is a fond memory. "That was a really fun shoot!" she says. "We bought a few bottles of lemonade and said, 'We'll drink it in some of the shots,' but then we were like, 'Nah, we should pour it over someone'. The guy who ran the studio said it was cool, so we thought 'Let's just do it, leave a big mess, and see if anyone complains!' Who said rock'n'roll's dead, eh?"

On top of her three bands, all of which have new music out, Baldwin is a co-founder of the Bristol Rock Centre. The most important lesson she can teach us today is to keep an open mind when it comes to bass and to music as a whole. "Metal is my favourite music, and I love getting involved in those gigs because they're my favourite type of people," she says. "But as much as I love all that, when you're looking at joining a band, you should streamline yourself for what you're best at. Always keep your ears open!"

www.beckybaldwinbass.com

Ork Talk

Colin Edwin, formerly of progressive types Porcupine Tree, is a busy man, with several bass-heavy projects on the go at any one time. We catch up with him as his band O.R.k. return with a new album

Photo: Al Peck

Tell us about O.R.k., Colin.
O.R.k. is an acronym, although everyone pronounces it 'orc', like Tolkien! The band is made up of myself, Pat Mastelotto of King Crimson on drums and a couple of guys from Italy – Carmelo Pipitone on guitar and Lorenzo Esposito Fornasari, also known as LEF, providing the vocals. He was also in another band, Obake, with me. That was a much heavier project in which I was exclusively playing a downtuned bass. Lorenzo is a great singer, not least because he's extremely versatile.

Do you also sing?
A bit. I do backing vocals live, but I'm never going to be Geddy Lee – singing and playing at the same time is way too challenging for me. You have to split your brain into two and it's painful.

As you live in different parts of the world, rehearsal must be tricky.
We all have scheduling issues, so we do it whenever we can. I remember the first time we went on tour, we hadn't been in the room together playing the material, so we did a quick two-day rehearsal. But that sort of thing doesn't faze me any more, because I've realised that nothing moves you on faster than a deadline. It's best to just jump in and do it. Musically it always works, as long as you're playing with people who know what they're doing – it's just logistical things that are the real problem.

What basses are you using these days?
In my basement I've got 10 or 12 bass guitars. There are three or four that I use a lot for recording, but live I'll be using my US-made Spector fretless. It's a four-string with a Hipshot detuner – pretty much all my basses have those. I've always preferred them to playing a five-string. Mine is a really nice, expressive instrument. If I'm not using that, nine times out of 10 I'll use a fretted Wal. I have a couple of them from the early Eighties, and I alternate between the two of them. I've used them both a hell of a lot, but they still do the job.

> "I'VE ALWAYS LIKED PLAYING LIVE – IT'S IN MY BLOOD, I GUESS"

These basses have relatively modern tones. Do you ever feel the need to 'go Motown'?
Absolutely. I never used to believe it when people said you couldn't get a traditional passive tone from a modern bass, but it's at least partly true – so recently I've been investigating the Ovation Magnum bass. I have a couple of vintage models that are really wild. They wouldn't be cost-effective to make now, because they've got huge great lumps of metal on them and enormous pickups. Their design was of its time, but they have a passive character that you can't seem to get from anything else.

What other gear have you got?
I'm a long-time EBS user and I'm taking out a Reidmar amp on this tour. It's very simple and reliable, with a classic sound that works great with whatever bass I put into it. I used an eBow on the 'Kneel To Nothing', the first single from our new album; it sounds like a keyboard. I use a bit of delay on a fretless to get that swell. I investigated that sound a lot.

Do you still enjoy touring?
Yes. Playing live is where it's at. I do a lot of recording, so playing live gets me out of the studio and forces me to think differently for a while. I've always liked playing live – it's in my blood, I guess. For better or worse, you're in the moment, and it's really satisfying when you have a project like this one – where everyone pulls together – and you see it all come to fruition.

What else are you up to?
I have the Twinscapes band with Lorenzo Feliciati, and I'm doing an album with Inna Kovtun, one of the singers from Astarta, a folk duo from Kiev, which is interesting music with fascinating harmonies. The time signatures are unusual but they're part of the music, rather than just being there to make it all pointlessly difficult. It's very bass-centric, because I really have to think about the voice and how to support the phrasing. I don't speak the language, so I don't understand the words, which means that there's a real connection between the bass and the voice.

The new O.R.k. album *Ramagehead* is out now on Kscope. Info: www.orkband.com

Snake Charmer

Neil Murray is a hero in bass world, having laid down the low end for Kingdom Of Madness, Snakecharmer, Whitesnake, Gary Moore and Black Sabbath, not to mention the small matter of 2000 performances of the *We Will Rock You* musical. Here we look back at his stellar performance on Whitesnake's *Live... In The Heart Of The City* from 1980

Words: Freddy Villano

Recorded live on June 23, 1980 at the Hammersmith Odeon in London, *Live... In The Heart Of The City* captures the pre-MTV-era Whitesnake at their incendiary best. Featuring former Deep Purple members David Coverdale (vocals), Jon Lord (keyboards) and Ian Paice (drums), along with the twin-guitar attack of Micky Moody and Bernie Marsden, it's evident that Whitesnake's southern-tinged blues-rock swagger was a key player in the development of what is now known as glam-metal.

Anchoring all of that testosterone with sexy, serpentine bass lines is Neil Murray, the journeyman bassist who has since played with Gary Moore, Black Sabbath, Brian May and countless others. Murray's playing on *Live...* represents the indelible imprint he's made on the canon of rock bass. He provides the songs with an air of improvisatory excitement that is perhaps most completely realised on the track 'Fool For Your Loving', which originally appeared on the 1980 studio album *Ready An' Willing*.

Murray drives the piece with adventurous walking lines and killer, in-the-pocket grooves, and his tone – with a little more midrange growl than is usual in hard rock or metal, maybe with a nod to Jaco Pastorius or Jack Bruce, two of his biggest influences – is emblematic of his highly distinct style.

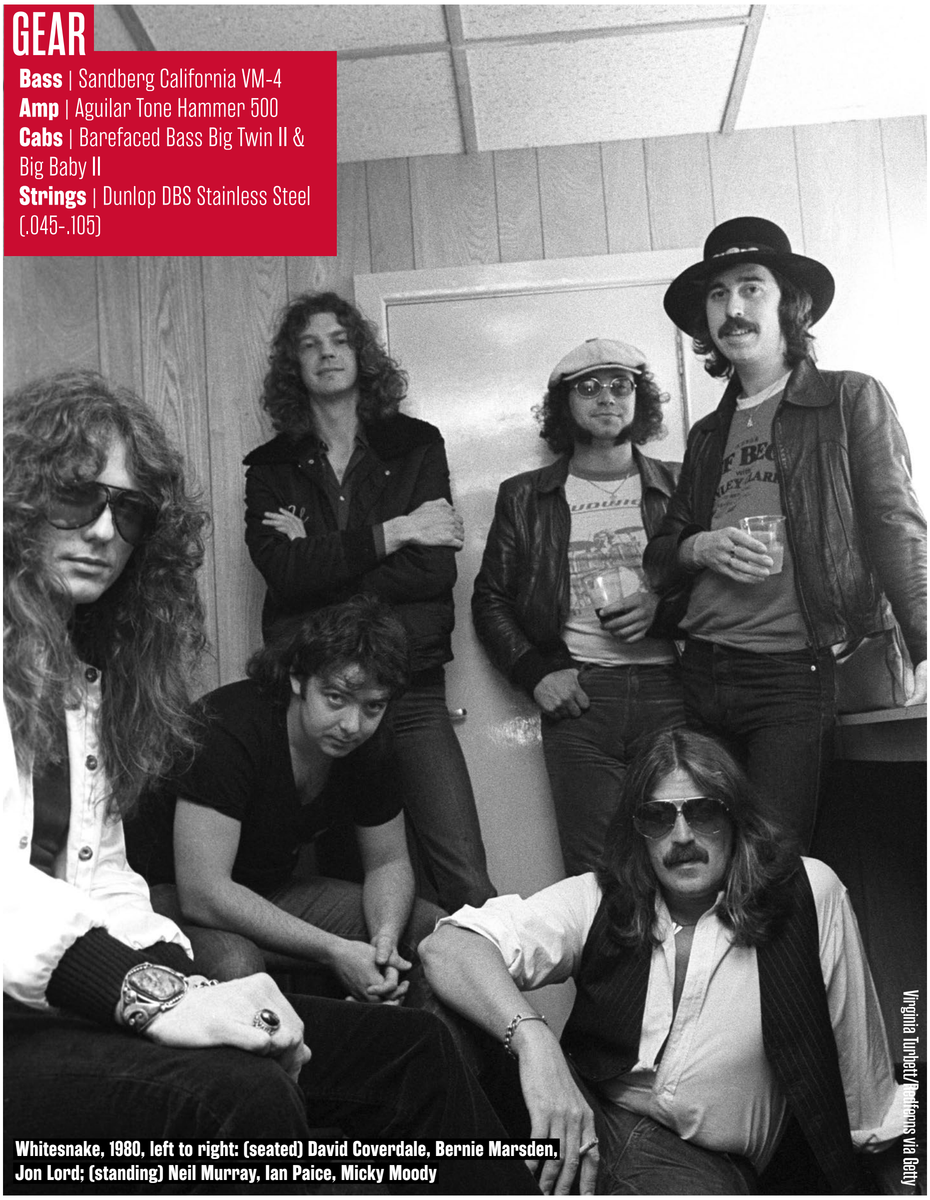
We recently caught up with Murray, who was at home in the UK gearing up for a few gigs with his new band, Kingdom Of Madness, which features ex-members of Magnum, to talk about his playing on 'Fool For Your Loving'.

"David Coverdale had done two solo albums with guitarist Micky Moody and, in the fall of 1977, they decided to form a band, which became Whitesnake," recalls the 68-year-old Scotsman. "Bernie Marsden joined on guitar and, originally, they had the bassist from Frankie Miller's band, Chris Stewart. They were auditioning a drummer one day and Chris wasn't available, so Bernie called me up to play with them. Not long after, in December 1977, Chris Stewart decided to return to Frankie Miller's band – I auditioned properly and got the job."

In Whitesnake, Murray, a fingerstyle player, says he would play aggressively with a lot of right-hand attack in order to

GEAR

Bass | Sandberg California VM-4
Amp | Aguilar Tone Hammer 500
Cabs | Barefaced Bass Big Twin II & Big Baby II
Strings | Dunlop DBS Stainless Steel (.045-.105)



Whitesnake, 1980, left to right: (seated) David Coverdale, Bernie Marsden, Jon Lord; (standing) Neil Murray, Ian Paice, Micky Moody

Virginia Turbett/Redferns via Getty

cut through the twin-guitar and keyboard triumvirate. "I used La Bella quarter-wound strings and two-pickup basses, whether they were Aria or custom Kramers or Fenders. I sometimes borrowed an Alembic in the studio, which gave me the idea of having separate outputs for each pickup to avoid the mid-cut that you get, for example, on a Jazz bass."

On *Live…* he played a custom Kramer 350B with two DiMarzio P pickups in reverse configuration, close together, and La Bella quarter-wound strings through a Sunn Coliseum amp and an Acoustic 408 4X15 cabinet, though he suspects that only the DI signal was used on the live record.

The key to Murray's bass part in 'Fool' is that he plays a moving part when he could simply have played root notes, without copping an exact guitar riff. In the verse sections, you'll notice his use of both scale and chord tones and especially chromatic passing tones, which demonstrate a knowledge of harmony and melodic movement. Also note how the line goes up at first, then down, then back up in answer to that. Murray would have played a part like this in the first position, using open strings whenever possible.

In the song's pre-chorus, the melodic motion keeps going with scale and chord tones. You'll dig the prominent 16th-note octave figure, which is emblematic of how he and Ian Paice would lock up together when playing fills. "Apart from having a great feel and sound, I loved how unpredictable Ian could be in his drum fills," explains Murray. "It was very challenging, but satisfying, if I could predict, within a fraction of a second, what he might play, and try to echo it if I could. If you play with people who are better than you, it's going to be very stimulating."

For a part like this, Murray says he wouldn't often use his little finger, but instead tends to shift position in order to use only the first three fingers (index, middle, ring), with his little finger out of the way against the neck, bringing it in when required for major pentatonic runs.

"When playing in C minor, I might be in first position," he surmises, "and then I would shift on the D minor to third position, or I might play the Ds and E flats on the A-string. I would probably still use my first three fingers to play C, D and E flat on the A-string."

The bass part in the chorus would again be played in first position, using open strings when possible. Listen closely and you'll note the continuation of the melodic movement that's been used all along; the non-chord tones against the F look more like the notes of a Gm7, but work because it's the natural thematic development of the first four notes in the bar. Second, there's a cool chromatic descending line against the F chord. And lastly, there's a high fill which clearly spells out the D7 chord with the high F-sharp third, climbing to the high A in the next bar.

For string bends, which Murray uses throughout the tune, he generally pushes up (in other words, towards the ceiling) on D- and G-strings and pulls down (towards the floor) on the E- and A-strings. An example of this can be heard at about 3:43 on the track, where there is what sounds like a high harmonic of an E natural coming from the bass. "I'm trying to get to the highest note I can by bending up at the highest fret, the 20th, which is almost a high F," explains Murray. "It's not a harmonic, however. It simply shows how much force I'm putting into it, plus you can hear that my Tim Bogert influence is coming out there."

Neil with the customised Kramer 350B used on *Live... In The Heart Of The City*

"NEIL PLAYS A MOVING PART WHEN HE COULD HAVE PLAYED ONLY ROOT NOTES"

In addition to gigging around the UK with Kingdom Of Madness, Murray has been proudly championing newly enhanced reissues of several 80s-era Whitesnake records on which he appears, including the eight-times platinum *1987* album.

"I always felt that the bass was just as important as the other instruments," concludes Murray. "In Whitesnake, I wasn't made to feel like I had to be a very traditional bassist, keeping in the background with my sound and bass-lines. Luckily the songs on those first five albums allowed me quite a lot of freedom, and I always put my own personality into the bass parts which I recorded."

Ultimatum

David Vincent, formerly of death metal pioneers Morbid Angel, returns with a new supergroup, Vltimas. As he correctly tells us: "There are no rules in music..."

Interview: Joel McIvor **Photo:** Tine K

Morbid Angel have been a huge force in heavy metal since the late Eighties, peaking critically and commercially with the albums they recorded between 1988 and 1995 with David Vincent as their singer and bassist. Uniquely among bands of the death metal persuasion, they transcended their niche, becoming the first band of their genre to sign to a major label and tour the planet.

Vincent, who served two tours of duty with the group, the second of which lasted from 2004 to 2015, now has several outlets – a rockabilly band called Headcat in which he replaced the late Ian 'Lemmy' Kilmister, a solo career as an outlaw country artist, and two extreme metal bands, I Am Morbid and Vltimas.

The latter, pronounced 'Ultimas', recently unleashed a truly stunning debut record, *Something Wicked Marches In*, on which the trio – Vincent plus sometime Mayhem guitarist Rune Eriksen and drummer Flo Mounier of Cryptopsy – deliver a blistering melange of riffs and roars. The big question for us is where the bass guitar fits in to this uncompromising wall of sound, so let's jump into the pit and ask Vincent how it all meshes together.

How did Vltimas come about, David?
I've been friends with, and a fan of, Rune for a number of years. I knew him when he was in Mayhem; he always had a really interesting touch. In my mind, he almost single-handedly defined a particular guitar

"BASS BRIDGES THE GAP BETWEEN THE DRUMS AND THE GUITAR"

style as it relates to what we would consider Norwegian black metal. We had hung out a bit over the years, and he called me out of the blue and suggested that we should get together and make some music some day. I replied 'Why is that day not today?' He already had this idea put together with our label, Season Of Mist, and he and Flo had started working on some music. The guys came out to Texas and we started putting some music together.

You're in Texas, Rune lives in Norway, and Flo is Canadian. How did you make it work?
Obviously that's somewhat of a hindrance, not to mention the fact that everybody has busy schedules. It would be easier if everyone lived two doors down from one another, as opposed to in multiple countries, but we managed to make it work. We recorded the album in England and we're super excited about it. I wrote the lyrics and the other guys came up with the music. Rune had lots of stuff; he's a riff machine and will just keep going and going. There's an abundance of material. We're virtually ready to record another album.

Describe the music for us.
It's full of all kinds of energy. There's not a single song on it that I'm not 100 percent comfortable with. There's a fair amount of diversity there, too. Our producer, Jaime Gomez Arellano, is originally from Colombia but lives in Woburn in England, where we recorded the album. He did Ghost's first record, and he did a number of things with Paradise Lost and Sunn O))), and he's really into analogue equipment. The only thing sampled on the album was the kick drums, which you pretty much need to do with anything that's fast. Everything else is natural, with actual guitar amps.

What gear did you play on the album?
I play my signature Dean bass, the Demonator. Sometimes things just work, and Dean basses have worked well for me for 20-some years. Dean have also made me some nice hollow-body basses with a traditional body shape for the rock stuff that I do. My main effects unit is a Jim Dunlop M80 DI, which has an EQ and drive and a few other little tricks as well. I showed the designer how I set it, and he said 'I never intended it to be used that way, but I totally see how it works when you do that'. I swear by that thing. That's pretty much it; I get my front-of-house sound through it, and the amps are just for the stage sound.

How does the bass fit into extreme metal?
I've always viewed bass as a tool for bridging the gap between the drums and the guitar. Sometimes it leans a little more towards one or the other, depending on the particular part I'm working with, but getting it to have a voice of its own is more difficult. It's always easy to overplay, especially when you have a drummer who is overplaying – but that's the style. Listening to the backbone of a riff, which may be the kick drum or it may be the snare in certain places, is useful, but there are no rules in music whatsoever. That's one of the reasons why I play lots of different styles of music.

Is there ever any room for soloing?
Where appropriate you can step out, but the fundamentals have to be there. If the music is as extreme as ours, you have to find something that is appropriate rather than trying to jam something in there. There's a lot of things not to do. Essentially, I try to look at it as a painting. Where does it need to be blue? Where does it need to be red? What colours need to be where in order to complete the spectrum?

Will Vltimas be touring?
Absolutely. This is the most lush, Wagnerian, misanthropic soundtrack you've ever heard. It's really clear, so there's no mistaking what I say, with or without a lyric sheet. It's loud and proud and there's nothing bashful. I love this record and I can't wait to get on stage with it. See you on the road. ■

Something Wicked Marches In is out now on Seasons Of Mist. Info: www.facebook.com/VLTIMAS.

Rough Ride

Peter Ljungberg of Rough Rockers looks back at the low frequencies

Image: Anders E Skanberg

I got into playing bass after I saw the Sweet live in Stockholm in 1975. Steve Priest, the bass player, looked so cool and played the bass in an excellent way. He also did lead vocal on two songs, 'No You Don't' and 'Restless' with such great attitude and feeling. A bit later I discovered Phil Lynott, bass player, frontman and songwriter, all in one. That's what I wanted to be too, and with Rough Rockers it eventually happened.

I hardly remember my first bass, although I know it was some kind of beginner's instrument. After that I got a Fender Precision and I've stayed with Fender ever since. I use D'Addario strings and I stick to the classic bass setup of four strings. It fulfils all my needs. I know some people want deeper bass tones and choose five- or six-string instruments; for that I sometimes play downtuned with thicker strings.

I see the bass player as the musician who balances the whole band. You need to understand the dynamic of a song; sometimes you just need to stick to the basic notes in sync with the drums, and occasionally you should improvise with more tones. As a bass player you need to take responsibility for the whole sound of the band, to keep it together as a unit. If you do that and don't put yourself in the background you'll be the most important band-member. My experience is that guitar players and vocalists sometimes need to be reminded that there is a band and a song, not a solo performance.

My bass heroes are Bruce Thomas of the Attractions, who played with Elvis Costello, Geddy Lee of Rush for his technical skills, and the aforementioned Lynott and Priest for their attitude and effective playing. When it comes to rock'n'roll, everyone is entitled to have their opinion about what is good and bad. As a musician who also writes songs, I can always find something in every style and genre that is genuine and shows good craftsmanship.

GEAR

Basses | Fender Jazz, Fender Precision
Effects | Boss ME-208
Amps | EBS Classic 500 head, EBS 8x10" cabinet

Rough Rockers started as a songwriting project; I wanted to create my own songs. We're currently preparing for the release of our EP, *Smoke And Mirrors*, which is a set of songs that showcases what our band is all about. I'm especially happy that the legendary Graham Bonnet sings on one of the songs, 'Unleash The Beast'. He's played with Yngwie Malmsteen, Ritchie Blackmore, Michel Schenker and many more. His voice is outstanding, and I had the song written with his voice as an inspiration and role model before I knew that he would actually record it with us. As always, he's brilliant.

www.roughrockerssweden.com

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These Are The Goood Times

Yes, three 'O's. As Lady Gaga's bassist Jonny Goood tells us, it's all about the mind, the body and the soul

Interview: Joel McIver

We watched you play the Super Bowl with Lady Gaga, Jonny. Great job.
Thanks! That was pretty crazy – it felt surreal to be up on those stages, doing splits.

I would worry about damaging certain sensitive organs, myself.
Yeah – all my friends bag on me about that! The splits does a number on your hips. I fully understand what Prince and James Brown had to go through.

The crucial difference being that those guys weren't holding a bass guitar when they did the splits.
Well, I guess that's what they say – listen to what people teach you, and then try and take it one step further. I'm from a small town just like Prince was, and I spent the better part of my life studying his accomplishments. Once I learned how to do his moves, I took it a step further and did it with a bass guitar in my hands. It was pretty nerve-wracking doing it on the Grammy stage, I can tell you.

I noticed a bit of headbanging on your part too.
Yes. Ever heard of the band Bad Brains? They're one of my favourite bands, and that's just the [Bad Brains singer] HR in me, man. You gotta have that energy. I'm pretty sure my body will be paying for it, 40 years from now, but while I'm able, I gotta give it my all, every time I'm performing. I do a lot of stretching before I go on stage, and also when I wake up in the morning. Again, that makes me really appreciate the greats that came before me. James Brown wasn't getting up in the morning and doing the splits with cold hamstrings – he was an athlete. And Prince was a great basketball player. I came up playing football and running track, and I was also a police officer for a few years, so all that kept me pretty nimble. Life is much better when you're flexible. You can do better dance moves for a start.

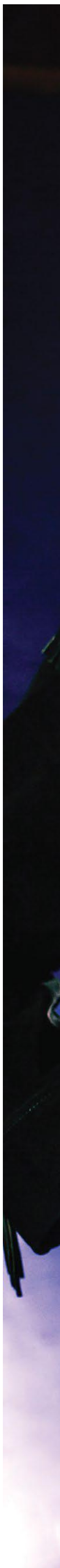
> "WHILE I'M ABLE, I GOTTA GIVE IT MY ALL, EVERY TIME I PERFORM"

Your stage performance is full-on, isn't it?
A big part of the show is the musicians. Gaga wants to feel the energy that the guitars have. When we played the Grammys, we didn't use programmed backing tracks, which is a rare thing these days. So I have parts when I run around, kicking and splitting, and then dance moves, and then parts where I have to go out and give my all and headbang my life away. I threw my bass off stage twice – once by accident and once on purpose. There's really no wrong way to rock out with her.

What are your go-to basses?
I have two babies. My main bass is a 2007 Fender Jazz with Nordstrand pickups, a Babicz bridge and a Performance preamp in it. It weighs about 15 pounds and it is badass. The other one is a customised P-Bass, also with Nordstrand pickups and a Babicz bridge. That one was painted by a great artist named Ron Bass, who's painted leather jackets for Ellen DeGeneres and has done stuff with Jay-Z and Beyoncé. I met him seven years ago, when I was fresh out of being a cop, and I told him one day I'd get this bass into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. Back then I did big gigs, small gigs – anything I could to develop myself as an artist. I carry his art with me on my bass, because blood, sweat and tears went into it just as much as it goes into everything I do.

Do you play five-strings too?
I do, but I wanted to keep the look and feel traditional – like James Jamerson and the Brothers Johnson. There's something special about the four-string bass that I love. We use standard tuning in Gaga's band, although sometimes I have some fun and drop down to E flat. The guitarists go down to drop-D or drop-C – it's basically a metal show, merging with pop and electronics. It's the craziest gig ever. I play synth bass-lines on a Roland ADX8 and a Moog synthesiser too.

How did you first get into bass?
I was a late starter – I was 18. I grew up around some heavy musical presences. My uncle was [renowned drummer] Cornelius 'Cornbread' Johnson, so I was introduced to classic rock and funk and hip-hop from an early age. I was into football as well – some of my cousins played in the NFL – so by the time I was a young adult I had to choose between football and music. I ended up breaking my cheekbone in a tackle, and what's funny is that I went right back



into that game and ended up breaking my finger catching the ball. I think that was the universe's way of telling me that I wasn't meant to play sports! I ended up getting sidelined, and I was bored, so I picked up a 50 dollar bass and started playing it eight hours a day. I still do that now, even after doing every gig I ever dreamed of. I still have the same hunger.

How did the Lady Gaga gig come about?
I've been working with Gaga for three years now. Before that I was with Wiz Khalifa, and after Wiz I took two years out to work on my own music. I grew up with him and we went to the same high school, which is where the hip-hop side of me comes from. My album *Bass Hop* came from that time. Then I got the call to do the Lada Gaga gig. I meshed right in with her band. I remember when I first met her, I was trying to be professional so I reached out for a handshake – but we looked at each other for like, point-two of a second and then we just both went in for a hug. I knew it was right. She welcomed me into her family from that point on, and two gigs later, I was doing the Super Bowl! I was like, 'Are you guys sure I'm supposed to be here?', ha ha! It's been the ride of a lifetime.

"THERE'S SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT THE FOUR-STRING BASS"

Tell us about *Bass Hop*.
I locked myself in a room, taught myself to rap and wrote the songs. I did it because I had to do it. My girlfriend at the time left me because she thought I was crazy, and I lost all my money. As Jimi Hendrix said, I had slices of bread but nothing to put between them! But here I am, and I've been in *People* magazine and a whole bunch of other media as well. It's been a long journey from when I was homeless and living in my car – or the 'age of enlightenment', as I call it, because I learned so much and created so much. I made an album that was new in American hip-hop and new in bass too. Faith in yourself is important, no matter how grim and dark everything looks.

I imagine you're the only former police officer to play bass at the Super Bowl and the Grammys.
Yes, it's been a crazy 10 years. I can still smell the gun and the badge on me. I'm trying to figure out how I got through these transitions. I have no clue.

Bass Hop is out now. Info: www.facebook.com/jonnygoood.

Frank Talk

Derek Frank has played the planet's biggest venues alongside Gwen Stefani, Shania Twain, Air Supply and other stellar acts. He takes time out of his hectic schedule to talk about gear, gigs and getting the perfect sound

There's a lot of variety in the bass gear I use, depending on the gig. I've done a bunch of Las Vegas dates with Gwen Stefani this year. For her show I'm using a Kemper Profiler; it seems these days that a lot of the bigger pop tours are going ampless, because a lot of front-of-house engineers prefer it that way. We run around the stage so much that it's cool to have something that's MIDI-controlled and a virtual amp.

Originally I had my tech build me a rig that was a pedal rack, with a bunch of pedals rack-mounted on shelves and a MIDI switcher, and I had that along with my Noble preamp. Unfortunately, for a show like Gwen's that causes problems. There are so many lights and video screens involved, plus on-stage props – such as a giant light-up staircase, rainbows that fall from the sky, and crazy stuff like that – that my rig and the guitarist's rig were creating a lot of issues with buzz.

We kept trying to trace ground loops and all this stuff, but my analogue pedals – as much as I love them – were acting as antennas for all the buzz that was happening. In the end I just got the Kemper and it's been amazing. All the patch changes run via MIDI from the show computer, so I don't have any kind of foot controller on stage with me, and it's easy.

I'm trying out a couple of different basses on the Gwen gig. I recently discovered Fano basses out of Arizona, who put out this instrument called a JM4. It's basically a Jazz bass with Thunderbird pickups and a Jaguar body style, and it's way cool. I'm loving it. I use two of those with Gwen as well as a Warwick CV5 passive five-string.

The setlist is the No Doubt hits and Gwen's own hits too, which include a lot of great basslines. The bass is a little more aggressive and up-front than the parts I played when I was with Shania Twain, and from a performance standpoint it's a workout. There's a lot of running around the stage and jumping around like an idiot – it's really fun. No Doubt were a mishmash of punk, ska, reggae, pop… a unique thing. I'm a big fan so it's been so much fun to play these great songs.

When I was with Shania I used a custom Lakland Decade with Nordstrand Big Blade pickups, plus a Lakland Darryl Jones, a LaBella Olinto P-Bass and a Martin acoustic. There was a Darkglass Vintage Microtubes Overdrive as well as a Cali 76 compressor and MXR and Radial units on the floor. I also have a 1976 Fender Precision for the other band I play in, Mindi Abair and the Boneshakers. For all my gigs I use LaBella strings, and when I'm not using the Kemper, I use an Aguilar DB751 head with two DB410 cabinets.

On top of all that I did a tour of Asia last year with Daniel Powter, who wrote the song 'Bad Day' about 10 years ago. So it's all busy! I should probably clone myself…

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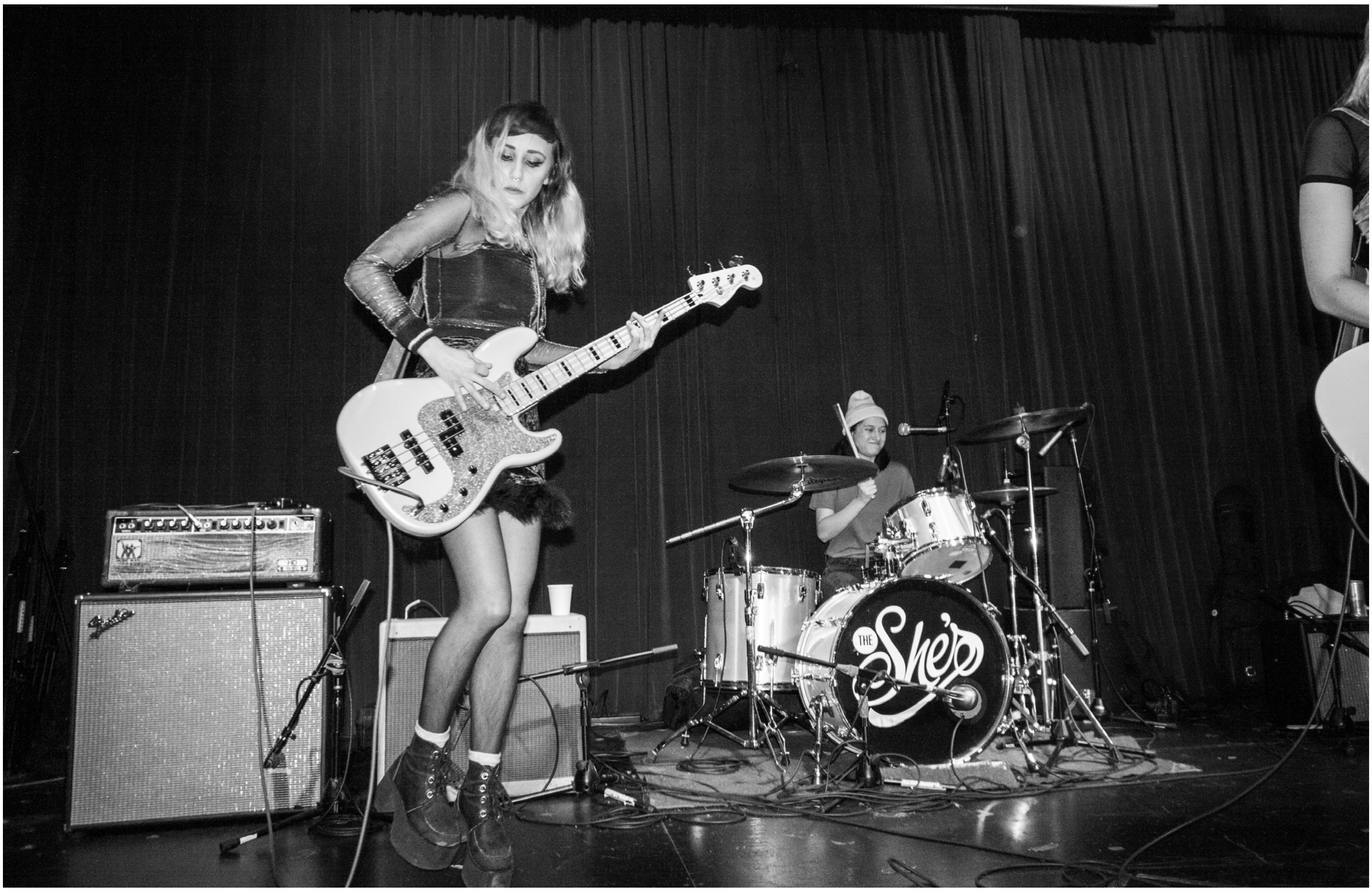

Mouth For War

Potty Mouth bassist Ally Einbinder talks up the low notes

Potty Mouth formed in 2011, the year after I graduated from Smith College in Northampton, MA. We started the band without any real goals or expectations other than to get together, jam, and see what happened. I had only been playing bass for about a year and a half, and Abby had never played guitar before. We all came from DIY punk communities where it wasn't a big deal to just start a band, write a few songs, and play your friends' basements. The more we went on with the band, the bigger our goals became.

After several years of touring and releasing material (an EP in 2012, an LP in 2013 and another EP in 2015), Abby, Victoria and I knew we were in it for the long haul. In 2016, we moved the band from Massachusetts to Los Angeles. Our new album, *SNAFU*, is something we've worked really hard on over the course of our time in Los Angeles, and we're so excited to finally share it with the world.

I had always wanted to be in a band ever since I started going to punk shows as a teenager. When I was in college, I became friends with a guy named Marc and we bonded over our love of 70s and 80s punk and power pop. Marc had an idea for a project called Outdates. He had already built up an arsenal of songs; I learned bass by teaching myself those songs, and Outdates became my first band.

My first bass was a modified short-scale Danelectro I bought from a bass instructor on Craigslist. It was a freak show. The body was vintage – a semi-hollow, short-horn silver body from the 1960s. The neck was taken from a newer model short-scale bass released by Danelectro in the early 2000s. It was a great first bass for learning how to play because it was so lightweight.

These days, I primarily play Fender basses, my main bass being a Fender PJ bass. I always use Ernie Ball Cobalt Super Slinky bass strings. I love the 1960s Hagstrom model FB bass I bought at a vintage store in Knoxville, Tennessee while on tour a few years back. It's one of the most unique looking basses I've ever seen. The front of the body is gold and the back of the body is covered in red tolex. It's about the size and weight of a guitar with a super skinny medium-scale neck, so you can really shred when you play. It's one of two vintage Hagstrom basses I'm lucky enough to own.

"THE MORE WE WENT ON WITH THE BAND, THE BIGGER OUR GOALS BECAME"

www.pottymouthworld.com

GEAR

Basses | Fender PJ
Pedals | Boss Bass Overdrive, MXR M84 Bass Fuzz Deluxe, Electro-Harmonix Bass Big Muff
Heads | Vintage 70s Music Man HD 130 Head and Fender Bassman 800 Head
Cabs | Avatar B410 Neo and Fender Bassman 410 Neo

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GEAR REVIEWS

Behold our world-beating bass gear review section, where we bring you the crop of each month's new, interesting or otherwise relevant bass guitars, bass amplifiers, bass cabs and bass effects. Occasionally we'll review a guitar effect if it's useful for bassists, but generally speaking, this zone is reserved for bass-specific gear.

We take our reviews seriously. *BGM* is the only print magazine devoted to bass in this country, and we have readers all over the world, so we're responsible about our conclusions. If a product is worth your time, we'll say so; if it's flawed, we'll make that clear. We're not beholden to advertisers in any way, and our tests are independent of the views of manufacturers and distributors.

When you read about a product here, you're getting a balanced review from an experienced bass tester. Value for money is at the top of our agenda in these cash-strapped times, but on the other hand, we believe in paying for quality.

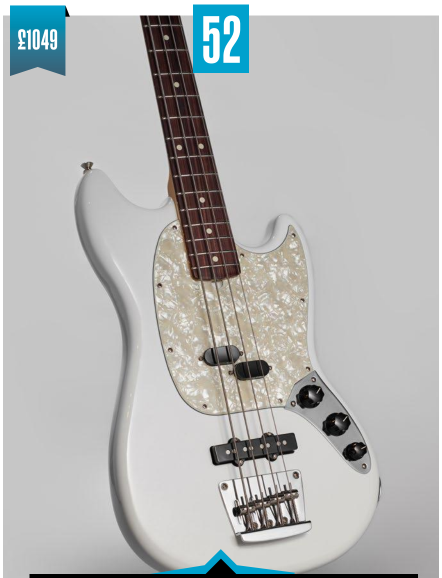
Right, that's enough from me, and remember, this is just about the only place that it's good to have GAS!*

Joel McIver, editor

*GAS = Gear Acquisition Syndrome (a malaise often suffered by bass players)

£647 £4026 — 50

YAMAHA TRBX600 AND TRBJP2



£1049 — 52

FENDER AMERICAN PERFORMER MUSTANG

£2869 £3044 — 54

STRANDBERG BODEN PROG 4 AND BODEN ORIGINAL 5

£169 £349 — 56

EASTCOAST GB210FL-NS AND GTB055-N

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YAMAHA
TRBX600 and TRBJP2

Jonathan Herrera gets to grips with two very different beasts from the East

Yamaha
https://usa.yamaha.com

£647
£4026

As passionate bass consumers in a capitalist economy, we're usually keenly aware of a manufacturer's strengths and weaknesses in advance of a big purchase. It'd be easy to dismiss Yamaha as the polar opposite of the boutique bass builders that tend to elicit the most praise. The reason is that Yamaha's product portfolio is not only the broadest in the bass industry, it's one of the broadest in all industry. I can't think of another company that makes motorcycles, boat motors, and ATVs while also building pianos, basses, and home stereos. Perhaps it's a particularly Japanese capacity for corporate multi-tasking, but whatever the reason, Yamaha is a uniquely impressive business. Given that fact, the two basses I'm reviewing here, the affordable TRBX600 and the high-end TRBJP2, are unsurprisingly impressive and remarkably well made.

TRBX600

The moderately priced TRBX600 is the sort of import instrument that would have been unheard of 15 years ago. Made in Indonesia, a country whose bass-building reputation has grown substantially due to the omnipresence of solid Cort-factory-built basses in Western markets, the TRBX600 is designed to convey boutique-style aesthetics. This means it offers a *de rigueur* figured-wood top (flame maple, in this case), a natural finish, a svelte "mass optimized 3D design", and dual-coil pickups that look remarkably similar to those found on many high-end instruments. Its playability is also in line with its boutique inspiration, with a slim 1.5" nut and remarkably shallow neck.

While the look is certainly expensive, it's heartening that Yamaha didn't skimp on the electronics. A Battery Alert LED indicates when it's time to swap out the included 9-volt battery, and a three-band EQ with active/passive switching helps wring versatile tone from the platform. The electronics installation is impressive, too, with tidy wiring for the price and pots that feel well damped and smooth – although I did find the EQ pots' centre detents a bit vague.

The TRBX600's construction, while not exactly luxurious, is faultless. Now that we're deep into the era of CNC machine manufacturing, basses like this can be mass produced with exceptionally tight tolerances. There's very little excuse for construction and assembly flaws. The fretwork is impeccable; the neck joint is tight and gap-free; and the hardware installation is first-rate. The days of shabby low-end imports are mostly behind us, and companies like Yamaha have long been proving that price and quality are no longer in direct proportion.

I found the TRBX600 to be a pleasant and companionable instrument with excellent balance and fast playability. While I prefer a little more meat in my necks, many will dig the Yamaha's small cross-section and flat radius. The instrument also sounds more interesting than many similarly spec'd basses I've played from Indonesia or China. Perhaps it's the meaty humbuckers, or this bass's particular wood cocktail, but the TRBX600 spoke with a throatier, more complex and textured sound than I expected.

While not a vintage-style instrument by any stretch, it can adequately copy Fender-style sounds with careful application of the well voiced EQ. Its strengths, though, lie in its clear and mildly aggressive tendencies – well suited to those that like to cut through and get noticed in a dense mix.

TRBJP2

John Patitucci should need no introduction. One of the instrument's true icons, Patitucci has long been among the bass's most progressive practitioners, bringing near unparalleled harmonic and melodic sophistication to countless jazz and fusion projects, most recently with the Wayne Shorter Quartet, where he mostly plays upright.

One of Patitucci's long-time trademarks has been his long and fruitful relationship with Yamaha, who first made him a signature model in the mid-90s. That bass has long existed as a unique take on the six-string, with a distinctively bell-like clarity and a 26-fret range. The most recent iteration of that classic, the TRBJP2, is a small, but sonically significant, reworking of his original classic.

Among the biggest differences the TRBJP2 has compared to the first signature model is its 35" scale, which makes the already enormous bass that much more intimidating. The three-band EQ and preamp has also been re-voiced, as have the impressively wide side-by-side dual-coil pickups. The wood formula remains the same, a complex sandwich of maple, ash, and alder for maximum punch and high-range resonance. The body contour is a holdover too.

As one would expect from a high-end instrument, the TRBJP2 is constructed without any flaws in its assembly or finish. While there's no disguising that its sheer size and width make it a bear to handle, the TRBJP2 carries its weight well, with superb balance and as-good-as-it-gets playability for a bass with an aircraft-carrier-sized neck.

In all of bassdom, few instruments have as consistent and distinct a tone as the Patitucci signature bass. There aren't many rivals when it comes to string-to-string clarity and note definition throughout the range. It's exactly the sort of instrument you might expect a fusion phenom like JP to play, with the incredible detail and punch necessary to make burning-fast bebop lines speak with authority.

If you were to sum up the TRBJP2 in a single word, it'd be 'evenness'. I rarely made use of the onboard EQ, relying on technique to wring variety from the instrument instead. If you're an inveterate six-stringer that likes to play fast and doesn't mind an unforgiving responsiveness as long as the pay-off is a rich and beguiling tone, the TRBJP2 should definitely be near the top of your shopping list.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

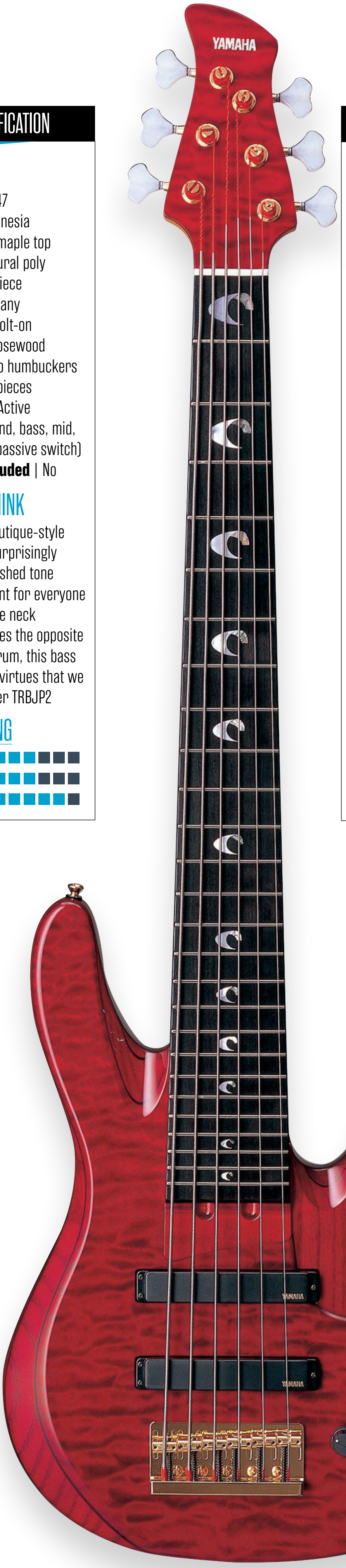
TRBX600
Price | £647
Made In | Indonesia
Body | Alder with maple top
Finish | Satin natural poly
Neck | Five-piece maple/mahogany
Neck Joint | Bolt-on
Fingerboard | Rosewood
Pickups | YGD H5 Alnico humbuckers with quad pole pieces
Electronics | Active
Controls | Volume, blend, bass, mid, treble (TRBX600, active/passive switch)
Case/gig bag included | No

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Exceptional boutique-style construction with surprisingly personable and polished tone
Minus | Not an instrument for everyone due to its slimline neck
Overall | While it occupies the opposite ends of the price spectrum, this bass still exhibits many of the virtues that we admire in the pricier TRBJP2

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■□□□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■□□□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■■■



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

TRBJP2
Price | £4026
Made In | Japan
Body | Ash/alder with maple top and back
Finish | High-gloss poly
Neck | Maple (with dual truss rods)
Neck Joint | Bolt-on
Fingerboard | Ebony
Pickups | Yamaha side-by-side dual coil humbuckers with Alnico V magnets
Electronics | Active
Controls | Volume, blend, bass, mid, treble
Case/gig bag included | Case

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | One of the cleanest and clearest sounding basses out there
Minus | Its monstrous measurements make it an acquired taste, playability-wise
Overall | Flawless construction creates the remarkable consistency and clarity that make Yamaha a key bass builder

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■■
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■■
VALUE	■■■■■■■■□□

FENDER

Fender American Performer Mustang

What's this – new pickups, a new passive circuit and through-body stringing? Mike Brooks casts a serious eye over Fender's new thoroughbred

Professional Music Technology
www.pmtonline.co.uk

£1049

Emanating from Corona, California, Fender's new American Performer bass range comes with several promised changes and modifications, incorporated into the Precision and Jazz models alongside this Mustang model. Replicated from the original 70s design drawings, the short-scale Mustang has long held a place in bass players' affections, starting with the playability and comfort offered by its reduced scale length: let's see how the new iteration holds up.

Build Quality

The Mustang's rounded body and limited cutaways offer a characteristic look and although there is no contouring, the body edges are well rounded. The Arctic White finish, coated in gloss polyurethane, works very well with the three-ply white pearloid scratchplate, while the chrome hardware, control plate and standard bridge – equipped with a larger base plate than previously – all project a vintage vibe. This is enhanced by the silver 70s Fender logo on the headstock, open-gear machine heads and the ability to run the strings through the body – although strangely, having the option to top-load the strings through the bridge as normal isn't an option.

White dot position markers feature on the front and side of the rosewood fingerboard and the satin urethane finish applied to the neck is super smooth. The 19mm string spacing prevents the strings from feeling cramped together, given the shorter scale length, and this – in conjunction with the modern C-shaped neck profile – offers a very comfortable playing experience.

The hardware is solid and functional: both pickups – a single-coil unit in the bridge, and a split-coil in the neck position – have been handcrafted in Corona as part of the new Yosemite pickup range. The headstock looks larger than it should be, but that is more to do with the body and neck dimensions; there is some headstock bias, rectified once placed on a strap.

Sounds And Playability

The Mustang comes with a volume/volume/tone control set, and the passive electronics for this range have been labelled 'Greasebucket'. In theory, this means that rolling off the tone control reduces the highs without adding bass to your signal or losing overall gain. In practice, this works just fine and means there is a little less fiddling to find the sounds that work for you. One positive aspect is that all three controls have an effect across the whole turn of each pot.

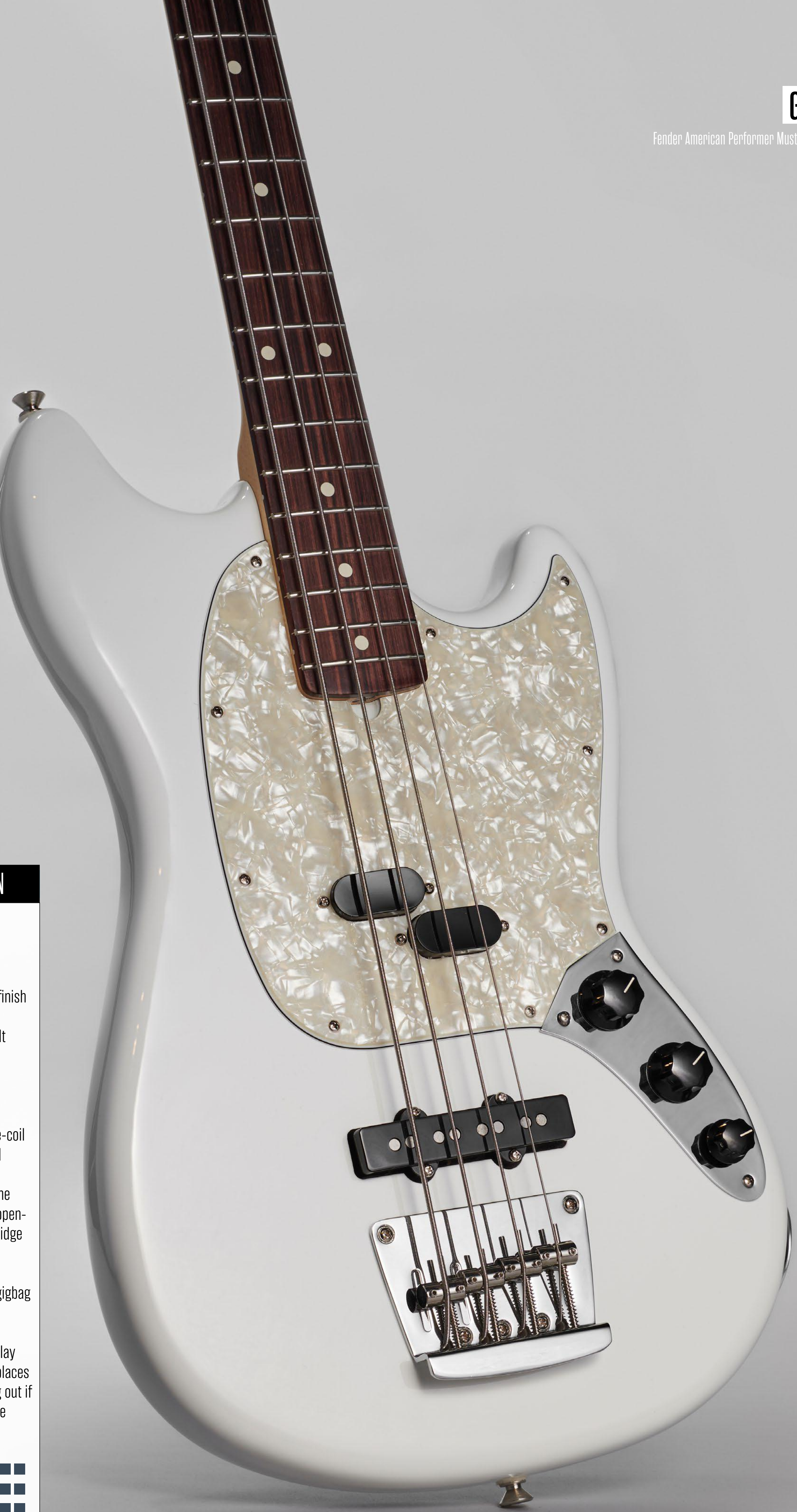
Both pickups offer the traditional tones you would expect from their location, and it was very noticeable that with both volumes

up and the tone control wide open, the sound is fantastically bright and sparkly, especially across the D and G strings. Although the bass plays very well and offers some highly usable tones, it has to be said that the low notes on the E string lack some definition and sound a touch woolly. Using a pick helps, giving the initial string attack more punch. Of course, the shorter scale will have a significant bearing on the tone and performance of the strings as their speaking length has been reduced to 30 inches. This enables a very supple neck that is easily playable with no pressure placed on the fretting hand.

Playability is very good, effortless in fact, and with no sharp fret ends and a good level of finishing, this is a fine bass. The setup is adequate rather than perfect, and there is some string buzz on the A string, but this can be easily adjusted.

Conclusion

So what do we have here? Short scale basses continue to prove popular, as they have for several years. What you lose in note clarity, tone and character with the Mustang, you make up for with a very enjoyable bass that ticks many boxes for those starting out – or for those who just find a long-scale bass too much effort. It's up against some competition at this price but then again, it's an American Fender, with all the cachet that that offers. For those looking for a comfortable, playable bass with great traditional tones, the Mustang fits the bill.



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £1049
Made In | USA
Body | Alder
Colour | Arctic white, high gloss finish
Neck | Maple, 30" scale
Neck Joint | Bolt-on, four bolt attachment
Nut Width | 42mm / 1.65"
Fingerboard | Rosewood
Frets | 19
Pickups | Fender Yosemite single-coil pickup x 1, split-coil pickup x 1
Electronics | Passive
Controls | Volume, volume, tone
Hardware | Chrome hardware, open-gear machine heads, standard bridge
Weight | 3.6kg / 7.9lbs
Left-hand available | Yes
Gigbag/case included | Deluxe gigbag

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Vibey and a pleasure to play
Minus | Tone can lack 'oomph' in places
Overall | Certainly worth checking out if you're looking for a short scale

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

STRANDBERG

Boden Prog 4 and Boden Original 5

Two stunning new headless basses from Swedish designer Ola Strandberg. Kev Sanders is impressed

Strandberg Guitars
www.strandbergguitars.com

£2869, £3044

We've come a long way since the first Precision rolled off the Fender production line. New designs, active electronics, advanced materials, chambered bodies, fanned frets… they've all been tried and many have been found to be genuine enhancements – but few designers have been brave enough to try all of these new ideas (and throw in a few of their own) in a single instrument.

Build Quality

Both of these basses are built on a dedicated line at the huge Cort factory in Indonesia. This guitar mega-plant also produces basses for Fender, G&L, PRS and many others. It's a highly automated process, but the resulting standards and tolerances are nigh-on faultless and the plant's huge purchasing power means that the tonewoods used are among the very best available.

In terms of construction, both basses are pretty much identical, the only real difference being that the Prog 4 has an ebony fingerboard with slightly different glow-in-the-dark Luminlay dots. However, electronics-wise the Prog 4 features Nordstrand Big Rig humbuckers and the rather brilliant Darkglass Tone Capsule EQ and preamp, whereas the Original 5 has the Nordstrand EQ and Zen Blade pickups.

Both have a chambered swamp ash body with a stunning tigerstripe flamed maple top. The unusual shaping of the lower body means that it's particularly solid and stable when played seated, although the payoff is that the bass can't be leaned against a wall or amp – not necessarily a bad thing. It needs a dedicated stand, available from Strandberg for around £60.

The roasted maple and walnut necks, with their angular Endure profiles are fixed to the bodies with five ferruled and countersunk screws and have a perfectly smooth satin finish. The two walnut strips are each flanked by a three-layer laminate of unidirectional carbon fibre, adding strength and stability. The fanned fretting is perfect. In fact both these basses arrived beautifully set up and ready to play straight out of their cases. On the back, the black anodised cover for the control cavity also features the jack socket which is set well back from the edge of the body. The exclusive hardware is all aircraft-grade aluminium.

Sounds and Playability

Strap either of these basses on and you hardly know you're wearing them. Both are ludicrously light. Even the five-string, at just a smidge over 6.5 lbs is a full three pounds lighter than my Fender Jazz Elite – itself no porker. When you actually start playing these basses you realise just how much thought has gone into the feel and ergonomics.

A good example is the neck shape. The patented Endure neck profile is a huge departure from the norm. Basically, it provides a flat pivot point for the thumb of your fretting hand on the back of the neck. As you move up the neck, the flat surface moves toward the treble side following the natural position of your thumb. If, like many bass players, you tend to play with your thumb over the top of the neck, the angular planes will feel a little odd at first, although the neck's overall shallow depth make it fairly comfortable however you play.

Acoustically, both basses are loud with a ringing sustain, but plugged in they have subtly different characters. The natural sonic character of the four-string Prog is aggressive, bright and attacking, a perfect match for the Darkglass preamp. Its EQ particularly emphasises the warm and harmonically rich frequencies. This means that the Prog 4 has a wide range of great rock bass sounds – everything from biting modern tones to a thick, fat punch, which just needs a little overdrive from an amp or processor to create a killer rock sound.

Sonically at least, the Original 5 lives up to its name. The powerful preamp and EQ mean that you'll quickly find your perfect sound, but the fundamental tone with the EQ flat is rich and warm with a sparkly top and a full but focused low end. The sound reminded me immediately of one of my favourite basses, Sadowsky's Will Lee signature, perhaps no surprise given the chambered and resonant bodies both basses have.

Conclusion

Traditionally, some bass players have tended to like things the way they always were. With these basses, Ola Strandberg is making a clear statement that things move on and that this is where we are in 2019, not just in terms of design but in manufacturing too. However, the price of these basses demands that we scrutinise every detail, and although they're very good, the contouring around the neck joint isn't perfect and the stained finish on the back of the prog 4 is a little uneven. That said, it's worth remembering that these basses are from the first production run. These small niggles may well be dealt with by the time these basses are available.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Strandberg Boden Prog 4 (Boden Bass Original 5)
Price | £2869 (£3044)
Made in | Indonesia
Body | Chambered swamp ash body with book-matched flame maple top
Neck | Five-piece roasted maple and walnut with carbon laminate reinforcement
Scale length | 33-34.5" (33-35")
Neck joint | Bolt-on, five bolts
Nut width | 38mm / 1.5" (44mm / 1.73")
Fingerboard | Ebony (maple) with Luminlay dot markers
Frets | 24 (plus zero fret) stainless fanned
Pickups | 2 x Nordstrand Big Rig humbuckers (2 x Nordstrand Audio Zen Blade humbuckers)
Electronics | Dark Glass Tone Capsule (Nordstrand three-band preamp/EQ)
Controls | Master volume (push-pull for passive/active), passive tone (treble cut) Bass (± 15 dB @ 50 Hz), Top (± 15 dB @ 4 kHz) Mid (push-pull for frequency), Down (± 15 dB @ 1 kHz) Up (± 15 dB @ 400 Hz), pickup pan
Hardware | Strandberg black anodised aluminium
Weight | 2.7 kg / 6 lbs (3.1 kg / 6.8 lbs)
Case/gig bag included? | Yes
Left-hand option available? | No

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Versatile array of sounds, light and comfortable to play
Minus | Price is high for an Indonesian factory bass, dedicated stand is needed, neck profile may not suit all players
Overall | Truly basses for the modern professional

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY ■■■■■■■■□□
SOUND QUALITY ■■■■■■■■■■
VALUE ■■■■■■■□□□

EASTCOAST

Eastcoast GB210FL-NS and GTB055-N

How low (in price) can you go, asks Mike Brooks, plugging in two value-heavy basses

Professional Music Technology
www.pmtonline.co.uk

£169
£349

The Eastcoast bass brand has recently seen some new additions, offering features and design elements you might not expect to see at this price. Here are two ends of the brand's spectrum – a four-string fretless at a smidge under £170, and a five-string through-neck bass at £350. Neither is going to break the bank and both potentially offer good value. But is there a catch?

Build Quality

On inspection, the fretless has some fine features: a deep lower cutaway and contouring front and back for comfort, an interesting 'transfer' top to give the impression of quilted maple, a vibrantly coloured fingerboard and a three-band EQ with independent pickup volumes. The longer top horn gives the player something to work against, and the bass sits very well against the player, despite its headstock bias.

With 20mm string spacing, the slim neck depth accommodates even the fattest of fingers, and navigating across the entire amaranth fingerboard is not an issue. The fingerboard is clean with no markers or lines to be seen on the front facing: white dot markers have been used along the side of the neck. The machine heads feel a little cheap, inevitably, but they do the job while the volume and EQ controls turn smoothly and operate cleanly. The neck pocket is well seated, forming a reasonably tight connection between the neck and body.

The five-string is also pleasing on the eye; the mother of pearl and abalone position inlays are very impressive indeed. As with the fretless, the five-string sports a satin finish, although the neck could have been finished better – I could feel the grain of the rosewood laminates as I traversed it. Still, the three-piece body sandwich and five-piece neck laminate make for some strikingly organic visuals. The deep lower cutaway allows great access to the upper regions of the 24-fret fingerboard, while the 16.5mm string spacing is a little constricting on the fretting hand despite a broad fingerboard and shallow D neck profile. The angled headstock helps to improve the string tone and overall tension.

I couldn't help but notice that this bass suffers from a lack of attention in the finishing department, with sharp fret ends on both sides of the full length of the neck. The machine heads are also lacking, with one or two

EASTCOAST GB210FL-NS

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Eastcoast GTB055-N
Price | £349
Made In | Eastern Asia
Colour | Natural, satin finish
Body | Okume, maple veneer, amaranth top
Neck | Five-piece maple and rosewood, 34" scale
Neck Joint | Through-neck
Nut Width | 45mm / 1.77"
Fingerboard | Amaranth
Frets | 24
Pickups | Humbucking pickups x 2
Electronics | Active, 9-volt
Controls | Volume, pickup pan, bass, middle, treble
Hardware | Chrome hardware
Weight | 4kg / 8.8lbs
Case/gig bag included | No
Left-hand option available | No

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Substantial; reasonable tones
Minus | Poor fretwork
Overall | Has potential; needs a better level of finishing

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■□□□□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■□□□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■□□

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Eastcoast GB210FL-NS
Price | £169
Made In | Eastern Asia
Colour | Natural, satin finish
Body | Poplar
Neck | Maple, 34" scale
Neck Joint | Bolt-on, four bolt attachment
Nut Width | 42mm / 1.65"
Fingerboard | Amaranth
Frets | 24
Pickups | Humbucking pickups x 2
Electronics | Active, 9-volt
Controls | Volume, volume, bass, middle, treble
Hardware | Chrome hardware
Weight | 3.4kg / 7.5lbs
Case/gig bag included | No
Left-hand option available | No

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | The price
Minus | A better setup is needed
Overall | A pocket-friendly, entry-level fretless bass

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■□□□□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■□□□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■□□

EASTCOAST GTB055-N

being poorly fitted, and all feel tight, squeaking when used.

Sounds And Playability

The fretless has a natural vibrancy that serves its tones very well. If you like your fretless tone strong and full with a bounce in its step, this bass may well interest you. There is a substantial amount of 'mwah' on tap and adjusting the individual controls offers up a good variety of interesting tones. The three-band EQ gives the player some extensive options and despite the price, the tonal quality is very good. Again, this bass could do with a little extra attention, as the truss rod needs adjusting and the intonation is certainly out.

The five-string's through-neck conveys the voice of the chosen timbers, and as a result it has an organic woodiness to its sound that is very much in keeping with this style of design. There are some pleasing fingerstyle tones and the slap tones are usable, but in places, the display is a little cheap sounding. It's difficult to pinpoint whether it is the circuit or the pickups (or both) that are lacking. The EQ is responsive, so note your EQ settings when finding a tone you like. As a five-string, its performance is passable – but it won't blow you away.

Conclusion

There are certainly some good ideas here, the fretless in particular was very pleasing. The five-string could have been a winner had it not had the potential to slice your fingers off courtesy of the sharp fret ends. As with many basses at the cheaper end of the scale, each instrument can differ wildly from another – you may well find examples that are better finished. And of course, you can't argue with those pricetags...

MXR
M280 VINTAGE BASS OCTAVE
EMMA ELECTRONIC
DISCUMBOBULATOR V2 AND OKTO-NØJS

Joel McIver brings down his mighty boot on this tasty trio of effects

(MXR) Westside Distribution
www.westsidedistribution.com

(Emma Electronic) Audio Distribution Group
www.audiodistributiongroup.com

£169.99, £159, £169

Two manufacturers, three pedals and dozens of different sounds – all of them available at the flick of a switch. None of them are cheap, though, so our reviewing eye is firmly on these units' value for money.

Let's start with the M280 Vintage Bass Octave from the venerable MXR range, a slightly less full-featured octaver than the Deluxe variant also available – and at the same time, way simpler. Plug in, admire the petite dimensions and solid build of the unit, and select one of a few options. The USA-made M280 offers us the ability to go either one or two octaves down, plus a dry/wet blend and a customisable mid boost. Roll on the dry volume for the most fun, remaining aware that a blend of your clean and effected tone may be better than the full octaved sound, depending on the situation.

Octave 1 is the most usable for bass players, we think. Sure, going down two octaves has a certain amusement value, but you'll need an 8x36" cab and/or the ears of a cocker spaniel to hear anything.

If you want to generate bass tones on a guitar or ukulele, of course, this is the option for you. Played in the midrange, the octaved tone is excellent, with the dry signal in or out. Use it for a killer synth tone, and on that subject I find that a result of sounding like a computer is that you naturally concentrate more on your timing and intonation – and as such, it's a useful practice tool. The mid boost is also a useful option if you want to pull your tone out of the low end, and you can add up to 13dB to this via an internal trimpot.

The Danish firm Emma Electronic have sent us two of their large, home-country-assembled range of pedals, the DiscumBOBulator and Okto-Nøjs (try typing that after a few shots of akvavit). Large, metallic and heavy enough to be used in self-defence if your drummer forgets to take his medication, each comes with an attachable sticky mat for pedalboard stability.

Let's step on the DiscumBOBulator V2 first. It's an autowah, a variant of envelope filter that I always used to think was something that people only used if they were too lazy to use an actual wah pedal. I was wrong, of course: although the pedal essentially offers variations on a single theme – the bow-wow, mwah-mwah you've heard on a thousand funky cuts – those sounds cover a wide spectrum.

The V2 is a second iteration of the original DiscumBOBulator with an added independent boost of up to 10dB, activatable with an optional footswitch should you so desire. The idea behind the addition of this feature is that it circumnavigates an issue often suffered by filter users, which is that the effect can lead to a perceived lack of volume. Using the new boost, there's no need to deploy a separate booster pedal in your effects chain when your 64-bar bass solo starts...

Modulate the tones with the Width and Attack pots, plus the unit's secret weapon, the Sense control, and deploy fingers and pick wisely, and you'll be rewarded with a world of funk. Take note also of that cunning up-down toggle located beneath the main pots, which allows you to achieve a 'reverse' setting reminiscent of a B3 Hammond organ.

Plug in the Okto-Nøjs and tweak the controls for a groovy synth-like effect. That's only its starting point, however, and there are a lot of modulation options here, so make sure that you consult the manual. The unit's arguably more important function is a deft solution to the problem we often face of underwhelming overdrive. Who among us hasn't had their bottom end sucked out (steady now) by a top-heavy distortion?

Essentially, this twin-function gizmo is the equivalent of two separate, independent pedals: an analogue octaver and a fuzz. This allows you to 1) to shape your overdriven tone, 2) refine your desired octave effect, and 3) combine 1) and 2) to come up with a proper, bass-heavy grind rather than an insipid wasp-in-jamjar effect.

Use the Okto-Nøjs subtly and the tones you come up with are very rewarding indeed... and also useful for scaring unwitting passers-by, as the combination of the two effects is genuinely monstrous. ■

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

MXR M280 Vintage Bass Octave
RRP | £169.99
Made In | USA
Features | Dry, Octave 1 and Octave 2 rotary controls, Mid boost push/pull (adjustable up to 13dB by internal trimpot), 2 x LEDs, footswitch
Dimensions | H 34mm / 1.3" x W 37mm / 1.5" x D 90mm / 3.5"
Weight | 162g / 5.7oz
Power | 9V AC power supply (included)

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■□
VALUE	■■■■■■■□□□

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Emma DiscumBOBulator V2
RRP | £159
Made In | Denmark
Features | Boost, Width, Attack, Sense rotary controls, Boost and True Bypass footswitches, 2 x LEDs, up/down switch
Dimensions | H 34mm / 1.3" x W 93mm / 3.7" x D 117mm / 4.6"
Weight | 354g / 12.5oz
Power | 9V AC power supply (not included)

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■□□

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Emma Okto-Nøjs
RRP | £169
Made In | Denmark
Features | Dry, Gain, Tone, Level, Okto, Tone, Color, Nøjs rotary controls, 2 x LEDs, 2 x True Bypass footswitches
Dimensions | H 34mm / 1.3" x W 93mm / 3.7" x D 117mm / 4.6"
Weight | 383g / 13.5oz
Power | 9V AC power supply (not included)

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■□□

BASS TUITION

Making you a better bass player

Welcome to our tuition section, in which *Bass Guitar Magazine* collates the wit and wisdom of the *crème de la crème* of the electric and upright bass world. We're fortunate enough to have some serious talent on the team, from world-class music educators to experienced touring musicians, who between them have laid down the low notes in every studio, club and arena in the civilised world. Note that we've divided the columns according to **Beginner**, **Intermediate** and Advanced level for easy reference. Whether you're looking to improve your playing technique, expand your awareness of theory, set up your rig to sound like your particular bass hero or simply get on a bus and tour, we provide the answers you need here. What are you waiting for? Dive in... **Joel McIver, editor**

Kickstart your journey to the top of the bass world here!
Steve Lawson is the UK's most celebrated solo bass guitarist. Across nearly two decades of touring, and a huge catalogue of solo and collaborative albums, he's built up a worldwide audience for his looping and processing approach to bass sound. Recent collaborators include Beardyman, Reeves Gabrels, Andy Gangadeen, Tanya Donelly, Divinity Roxx and Jonas Hellborg. He been teaching bass for over two decades, and lectures at universities and colleges across the globe. Victor Wooten once commented, 'Steve Lawson is a brilliant musician. I've known about him and listened to him for many years. He may not be one of the most famous bassists – but he is definitely one of the most talented'. Who are we to argue?
www.stevelawson.net

STEVE LAWSON

Beginners | 66

Now you're rolling with theory and techniques, it's time to hit the next level
Philip Mann studied at the London College of Music, securing bachelor's and master's degrees in performance before receiving a scholarship to study under Jeff Berlin at the Players School of Music in Florida. Endorsed by Overwater and Vanderkley, he's now a busy international freelancing electric and double bassist. His performance and session credits include work with double Grammy Award-winning guitarist Albert Lee, five-time Grammy Award nominee Hunter Hayes, Deep Purple's Steve Morse, Billy Bragg and country artist Peter Donegan. He has featured as a solo demonstration artist at the London Bass Guitar Show every year since 2012 and is currently a member of the visiting faculty at the Players School while also lecturing for Scott's Bass Lessons.

PHIL MANN

Intermediate | 70

Take the bass world by storm with the ultimate tuition section
Stuart Clayton has been a professional musician, writer and transcriber since 2002 and has worked in function bands, cruise ship gigs, theatre shows and more. He spent four years recording and touring the world with legendary Emerson, Lake & Palmer drummer Carl Palmer and has worked for *BGM* since its first issue. Since 2007 Stuart has worked as the Head of the Bass Department at BIMM Bristol, where he continues to teach all levels of the degree course. In addition, he has also worked as the Bass Guitar Technical Specialist for the Rockschool exam board. Stuart now runs Bassline Publishing, which publishes transcription books for bassists such as Mark King, Marcus Miller, Stuart Hamm, Bernard Edwards, Stuart Zender and John Entwistle, as well as an acclaimed range of tuition books.

STUART CLAYTON

Advanced | 76

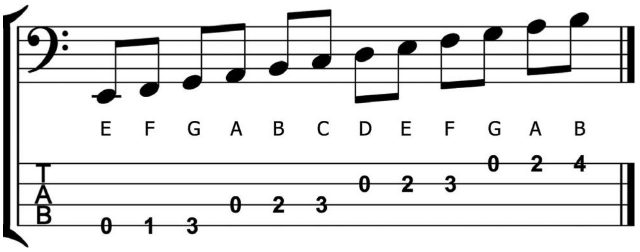
BGM Notation Legend

The following is a guide to the notation symbols and terminology used in *Bass Guitar Magazine*

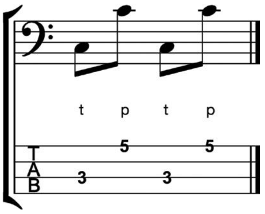
The Stave: most music written for the bass guitar uses the bass clef. The example to the right shows the placement of the notes on the stave.

Tablature: this is a graphical representation of the music. Each horizontal line corresponds with a string on the bass guitar, with the lowest line representing the lowest pitched string (E). The numbers represent the frets to be played. Numbers stacked vertically indicate notes that are played together. Where basses with five or six strings are required, the tablature stave will have five or six lines as necessary.

Notes shown in brackets indicate that a note has been tied over from a previous bar.

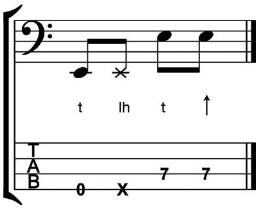


PLAYING TECHNIQUES



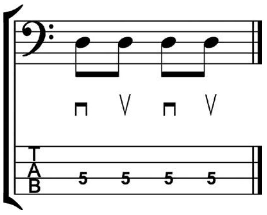
SLAP AND POP TECHNIQUE

Notes slapped with the thumb are marked with a 't', notes popped with the fingers marked with a 'p'



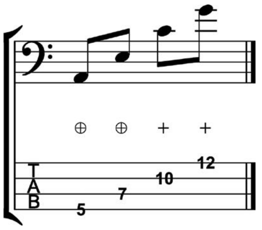
ADVANCED SLAP TECHNIQUE

Fretting hand slaps are marked 'lh' and double thumbing upstrokes are shown with an upward pointing arrow



PLECTRUM TECHNIQUE

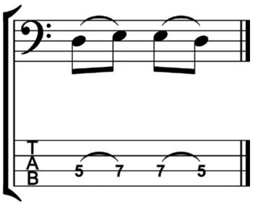
Where necessary, down and upstrokes with the pick will be shown using these symbols (down-up-down-up)



TAPPING TECHNIQUES

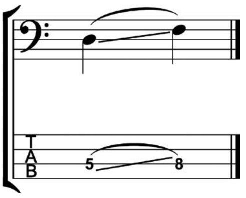
Fretting hand taps are shown with a '+' in a circle. Picking hand taps are just '+'. Particular fingers may be shown with numbers.

FRETTING TECHNIQUES



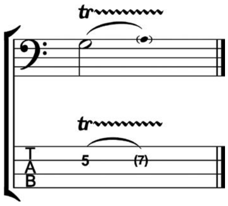
HAMMER-ON AND PULL-OFF

Hammer-ons and pull-offs are shown with a slur over the notes. Only the first note is plucked by the picking hand



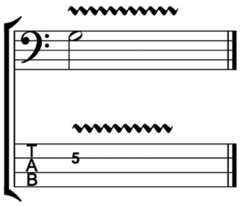
SLIDE (GLISSANDO)

Slides are performed by playing the first note then sliding the fretting finger up to the second note



TRILLS

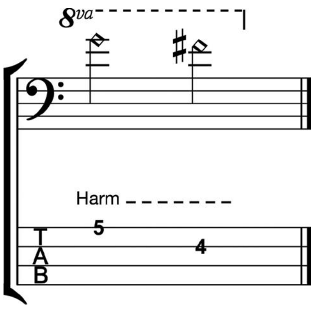
Trills are performed by rapidly alternating between the two notes shown using hammer-ons and pull-offs



VIBRATO

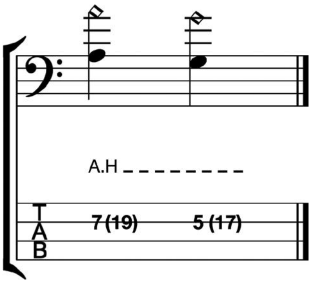
The pitch of the note is altered by repeatedly bending the string up and back with the fretting finger

PLAYING HARMONICS



NATURAL HARMONICS

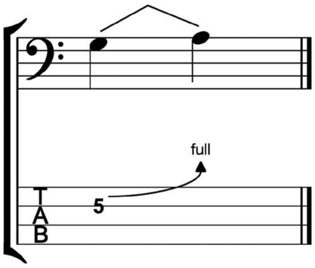
The note is played as a harmonic by lightly touching the string above the fret indicated



ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS

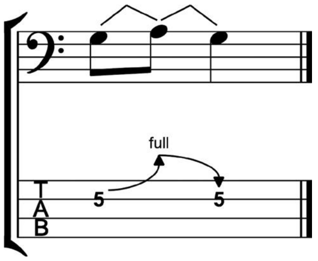
Pluck the string while fretting the lower note and touching the edge of the picking hand's thumb to the note in brackets

BENDING NOTES



BEND

The note is bent upwards to the interval specified: ½ = semitone, full = tone



BEND AND RELEASE

The note is bent up to the interval indicated then released back to its original pitch

THE FRONT LINE

Want to make it as a professional bassist? Listen up as *BGM*'s world-class bass team reports back from the tourbus

THE JAZZ BASSIST

RUTH GOLLER

Jazz warrior Ruth on 'studio exhaustion'

It's been a hectic couple of months. Usually I have a healthy balance of gigging and recording, but for some reason I have just recorded four different albums with different bands back to back. It has been overwhelming and quite tiring. I always find recording very intense, because I every take I do could be the one that will end up on the album – and suddenly I feel under pressure!

With gigging it's different, because the music only exists for a split second and then it has passed. This allows me to be a bit more relaxed and embrace mistakes, so I'm inspired to take more risks. Another thing that I've always struggled with in recording studios is getting the bass sound right. Most of the time I have to use headphones, so to get a realistic idea of what my sound is like can be difficult. I spend a lot of time checking the sound of my amp in the small booth where my amp sits, and then I make sure all my pedals are set up properly, and that I'm happy with all the levels.

Engineers often ask me what kind of microphones I prefer, but to be honest I've never got my head around that issue, so I usually trust the engineer to choose. I always ask them to take a clean DI from me as well as the amp signal, as my sound can be quite dirty at times – and if I'm wearing headphones, it's difficult to hear what it sounds like. With the clean DI, I always have something to fall back on in case my sound is too dirty. I usually ask the engineer to record a bit of bass by itself first, so I can check if I am happy. After that, I check it with the whole band to see if I'm absolutely satisfied.

It really is worth spending a little bit of time on getting your sound right before starting to record, because even though you might not be able to choose all your favourite takes, you can at least be happy with the sound you're making.

www.ruthgoller.com

THE METALHEAD

DANIEL FIRTH

Tone tips from Cradle Of Filth bassist Dan

For some, the quest for the perfect tone is a never-ending journey. It's something you can sink a lot of time and money into, as well as storage and pedalboard space! However, the exciting thing about the search is there are always new innovations to investigate, as well as a vast range of classic vintage gear that continues to stand the test of time.

Leonardo Treviño

I've had a fair few 'tonal Holy Grail' moments in my career as a bassist; you play through a piece of gear for the first time and it instantly raises your very expectations of what's possible. For me, these moments range from when I first tried a Sansamp Bass Driver DI as a fledgling player, to cranking an Ampeg SVT with a matching 8x10 on a big festival stage. However, as enjoyable as the latter experience was, the gear that I've tended to invest in and stick with has been the gear that provides awesome tone with minimal fuss.

That being the case, I'm currently overjoyed with the Darkglass B7K Ultra, which I'm using on tour at the moment with Cradle Of Filth. Combining first-class options for drive, EQ and even cab simulation makes it a perfect all-in-one solution for me, and a great example of something that can simplify a rig without compromising tone. The cab sim in particular brings extra authenticity to my tone and saves greatly on space and cost. This feature is a huge boon for me when making demos at home, as it allows me to avoid fiddling with microphones or disturbing neighbours with loud amps.

My current infatuation doesn't mean my search for the perfect tone is over, though. There are so many variables from instrument to speaker, and so many innovative designers out there, that you never know where the next Holy Grail is going to arise from!

www.cradleoffilth.com

THE ALTERNATIVE ROCKER

MICHAEL MCKEEGAN

Know your strengths, advises Therapy? bassist Mike

One of the most exciting things about being a musician is the feeling of your musical ear developing over time. But without new challenges your playing can easily get stale. I've been asked by younger players, beginners and their parents about the best way to learn bass, and there seems to be a weird idea out there that you will fall into one of two camps when starting out: either you will play by ear, or you will learn to read music.

I've never subscribed to this limited outlook. Both of these approaches are integral to making you a rounded player. If you can only play what you read or learn then your jamming and spontaneous composition can end up becoming stilted. Likewise, if you've relied on playing by ear all your life you may well fall short when it comes to sessions and dep gigs. Theory-wise, you should at least be able to recognise keys, time signatures and which notes are falling where. Sight-reading is something you only can get good at by practising, but it can definitely bring confidence to your playing.

Ideally, you should be able to draw on both of these disciplines. If you're playing off a sheet or a loose brief, then stick to it, but do feel confident about suggesting some more spontaneous parts. I've been in the position where a song had a very defined bass part, but I was able to add a different bit of flavour. The songwriter was delighted, and I was relieved and those 'on the fly' parts became incorporated into the tune, but if I hadn't been able to interpret the initial idea then I would've struggled to nail the main theme and wouldn't have been confident in suggesting the variations.

By all means play to your strengths. If you have perfect pitch, or you find reading off a sheet a breeze, then explore that in as much depth as possible.

www.therapyquestionmark.co.uk

THE TV STAR

DAVE SWIFT

New gear is here, says Jools Holland's bassist Swifty

Acquiring an endorsement deal seems to be a hot topic among musicians these days, so I'd like to offer a few thoughts from my own experiences. After using the same brand of amplification for eight years, I've just switched to Bergantino Audio Systems. Due to growing demands and needs, a change of gear was required, so I auditioned several well-known brands, but Bergantino impressed me the most. They're a perfect fit for me at this stage in my career.

Most bass gear these days is clearly of a high standard – your choice is largely down to personal preference I'm aware that many bassists have bought equipment on my recommendation and I hope they've been happy as a result, but situations change, and everyone needs to do their own research and try as much gear as possible to find what's right for them.

Landing an endorsement deal can be highly desirable, but it's important that the pursuit of this doesn't become all-consuming or detract from the far more essential pursuit of becoming a better musician. In my case, I began appearing regularly with Jools on various TV shows from 1992 onwards, backing famous artists, yet for the first five years, I wasn't offered – and nor did I seek – a single endorsement deal. The reality was, I didn't particularly think I deserved one. I was buying all my own gear, even picks, yet there I was on TV with artists such as Chaka Khan, Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton, James Taylor and so on. My focus was solely on doing my job and doing it well.

Integrity is everything, so if you approach a company seeking sponsorship, do it because you genuinely love and believe in their gear. Don't get involved solely because you're getting a discount or something for free. It'll be better for your conscience and reputation!

www.daveswiftbass.com

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STEVE LAWSON

Beginners' Tutorial

Percussive muting meets never having to tape up your thumb, says beginners' guru Steve Lawson

This month we're continuing our running theme of looking at different ways that muting affects our sound. We're going to have a think about it as a percussive effect. The uses we've explored so far have been about stopping strings from vibrating when we don't want them to, or changing the envelope of the note by palm muting so that the notes decay much faster and have far less treble content.

The variation we're going to explore this month takes muting a stage further and uses it not to only stop the note that was ringing, but also to create a percussive sound in the process. There are several places where this can be really useful, and it ties in with a function that is right at the heart of a significant piece of bass history. If you've ever looked into the history of slap bass, you'll know that the man who pioneered it on electric bass was the great Larry Graham, who developed the technique while playing in a drummerless duo with his organist mother, so the slap and pop (or 'thump and pluck' as he calls it) allowed him to emulate the patterns and impact of a kick drum and snare.

If we draw a line between that and the pizzicato upright bass technique that preceded it in bluegrass and rockabilly music, we get to a place of thinking about how percussive sounds on our instrument can help us fulfil the role of a percussionist or drummer. I've used this extensively in a solo context to add rhythmic interest to loops. It's also useful in singer-songwriter contexts, where being able to take on some of the percussive, rhythmic drive of the music takes a lot of pressure off the guitarist or pianist.

Enough preamble. What's the actual technique that we're talking about? Let's start with its most basic form. To begin with we're going to play quarter notes on beats 1 and 3 of the bar and bring our picking hand down onto the strings to stop the note on beats 2 and 4. I'm going to mark it on the score with a crosshead to denote that the sound does have a rhythmic value. It's not just a rest, but there shouldn't be any actual pitch to the sound, just a pleasing 'thunk' sound. Check out Example 1, below.

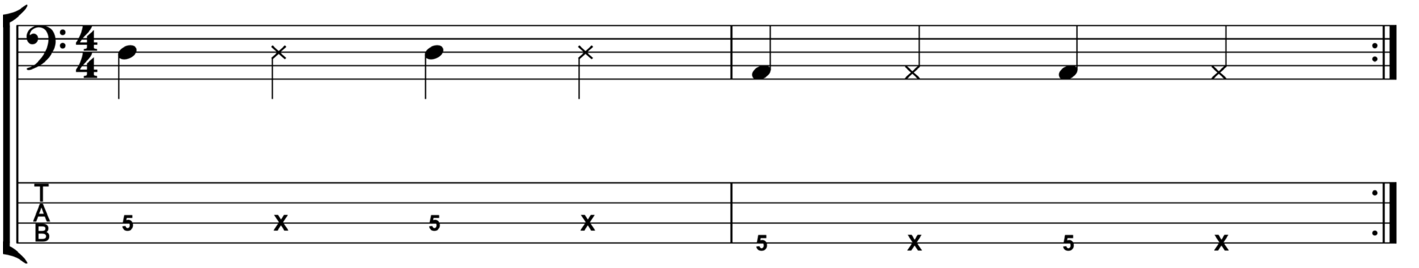
Once you've played the first note, lift your hand slightly away from the bass, and bring it down on the beat, so your fingers are back in place to play the next note. If you're struggling to gauge how forceful to be, start softly so there's no percussive element to it at all, just the note being muted on the beat. Then gradually increase the force you apply until the muting sound feels balanced with the volume of the note.

It makes most sense to do this through your amp, because hitting your strings like this can sometimes produce loud thumps through the pickup if your strings are particularly loose, or the pickup is especially close to the strings. Your adjustments to how hard to bring your hand down onto the strings will have to take those things into consideration, so developing a good healthy 'whack' on the strings while unplugged may produce speaker-worrying clunky sounds when you try it plugged in.

Your thumb, as you can see in the pictures, lifts up as well, and is brought back down onto the string below the one you're picking on. Its role as a guide for your picking fingers is still deeply important here. It's really helpful not to have your thumb anchored on the pickup for this kind of technique. You may also want to move your hand along the length of the neck to find the perfect percussive sound, and being stuck to one position over the pickup will greatly limit your range of possible tones.

When we create sounds like this with our instrument, it's important to consider the way that those who would normally be playing the percussionist's role think about their sound. Once we've worked out how to get a percussive sound from

Example 1



After playing the first note, lift your hand away from the bass, and bring it down with enough force to create a percussive sound.

this technique, it's important to refine that technique so it's the best percussive sound we can make.

A conscientious drummer will spend a huge amount of time and effort learning exactly how to hit a snare to get the sound they want. Playing with a drummer who just thoughtlessly thwacks a snare like they're trying to smash a Brazil nut with a rolling pin is a horrible experience as a bassist. We expect the person playing drums to take as much care over their sound as we do over getting our tone right, and developing control over it to make sure it stays right as the music changes. The same goes for our control of a less obvious bass sound like this.

This brings us back to our running theme. Being a 'beginner' in the sense of not having spent long playing the bass guitar doesn't mean you have to suddenly become a rudimentary listener too. We all have a lifetime of listening to music, of developing opinions about music, of cultivating an ever-growing appreciation for the exact kinds of production and performance details that we most appreciate in our favourite players. We can discern minute details between techniques and styles by ear, and we can start to bring that level of expert knowledge to bear on our bass playing the minute we pick up the bass.

So while our first task here is to just get a sound from the technique at hand, it's also vital that we start to make aesthetic decisions about what we like and don't like about the application of the technique, and plan ways to fix those issues. Moving our hand along the length of the string to find the sweet spot for a particular technique is an active demonstration of our respect for the music, and by extension for anyone that might be listening to us play!

There are so many things we can adjust here, such as timing, which is a big issue for any technique that starts away from the strings. This requires us to anticipate the beat by a tiny amount, and to begin the motion to bring our hand down onto the strings just before the beat. If you find that your timing is off, think about this anticipation and what it's going to take for you to be able to land the 'hit' right on top of the beat. Take it slow, stay relaxed and give yourself time to adjust. You can try this technique freehand, or with a click, or with a drum track: search YouTube for simple rock or country beats to play along with if you don't have access to other drum tracks.

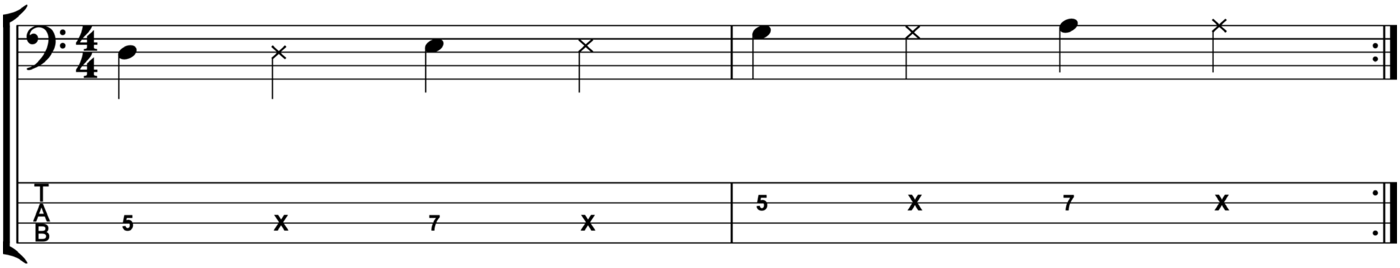
Adding any new technique requires us to go through the four-step process that we've identified in previous columns. These four steps are Imitate, Assimilate, Integrate, Innovate. We start by imitating the technique as best we can. The assimilation process is what we're talking about here: adjusting the details of how and where we apply a technique to optimise it for our instrument, our hands, and the musical context we want to play in.

Let's move the notes to a different position. Try out Example 2, overleaf.

Now we're having to co-ordinate moving our fretting hand to different frets while keeping track of what our picking hand is up to with the percussive hits. This is a step up in complexity that starts to hint at how we can use these hits as the 'glue' in a line. Notice that they're all on beats 2 and 4 – exactly where the snare would be in a classic straight 4/4 rock drum groove.

The next element we're going to add is to combine the percussive hit with our picking hand with a muted note in our fretting hand. This simulates and simplifies the classic bluegrass upright bass slap technique. Check out some examples on YouTube, it's a rich and varied technical world courtesy of our acoustic cousin. We have three events that we're combining here. The first is picking a note as normal on beat 1; the second is our percussive

Example 2



"IT'S ALWAYS GOOD TO MAKE SURE THAT AS WE GET COMFORTABLE WITH A NEW TECHNIQUE WE'RE NOT STUCK ONLY PLAYING THAT ONE IDEA IN ONE POSITION"

hit on beat 2; the third is the addition of a muted note plucked on the eighth note after the percussive hit. If we're using rest strokes and alternate two-finger picking, then the muting will be assisted by our other picking finger coming to rest on the string in preparation to play the note on beat 3. Example 3, opposite, shows what all this looks like.

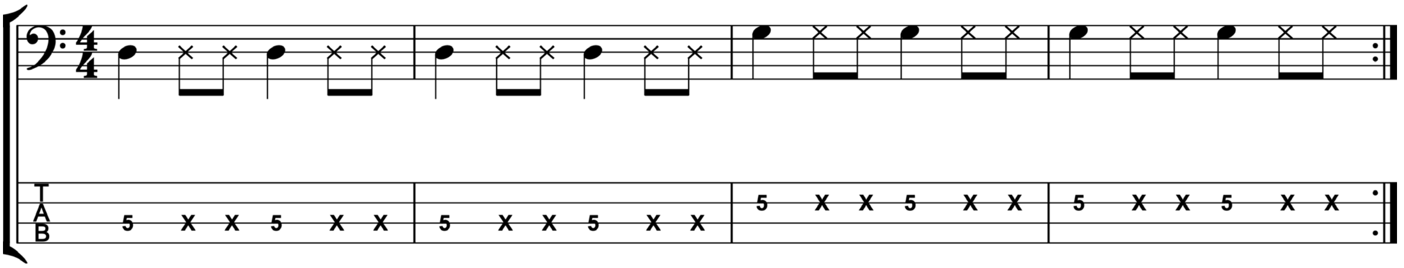
The muted note following the percussive hit is plucked as normal with our picking hand, and muted using the method we talked about a couple of months back – lifting your fretting hand up, and making sure that at least two fingers are in contact with the string to prevent a harmonic from ringing out. You can experiment with fretting the note on beats 1 and 3 with either your index finger, and therefore adding a finger in front of the note when you mute, or with your little finger, and adding the additional muting support behind the note.

Each will change the way it feels to play a little, and will offer different further combinations of notes in that hand position. It's always good to make sure that as we get comfortable with a new technique we're not stuck only playing that one idea in one position. The 'integration' phase of our four-step process requires us to look at how this new element combines with all the things we normally do, so we want to have as many ways of connecting it to the rest of our playing as possible.

We've only got three elements here – four if you count the shift from the A string to the D string – but this is definitely an exercise that you want to start really slow. Some of you may find that you fall

You don't have to lift your hand a long way from the bass. The closer you keep it, the easier it is to stay in time

Example 3



"IT CAN FEEL LIKE THE SNARE IS HAPPENING BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU'RE DOING, CREATING THE SENSATION OF THE RHYTHM SECTION PLAYING WITH A UNIFIED BRAIN"

As you bring your hand back down, aim to have it be in the right position to play the next note

into a comfortable rhythm with it straight away – if so, that's great. Run with it and see what other rhythmic patterns you can find that work. If you struggle with it, keep going back to the simpler version, Example 2, and revisit the fretting hand muting from previous columns to make sure that each element is comfortable before trying to combine them.

When you can, try this with a drummer. While we've talked a lot about how it simulates the effect of a snare drum, it's also a very effective way of bedding our bass-lines in with what the drummer is doing. When our percussive click and their snare drum are fully in sync, the feeling of connection runs pretty deep: it can even feel like the snare is happening because of what you're doing, creating the sensation of the rhythm section playing with a unified brain. That's the feeling we're trying to generate each time we lock in with a drummer, so any technique we can add that helps us to bring that about is a good thing.

Experiment, take it slow, and have fun. See you next month!

PHIL MANN

Intermediate Tutorial

Slapping in 5/4 is outlawed under the Misuse Of Funk Act 1983, but Phil Mann is just the man to flout the rules

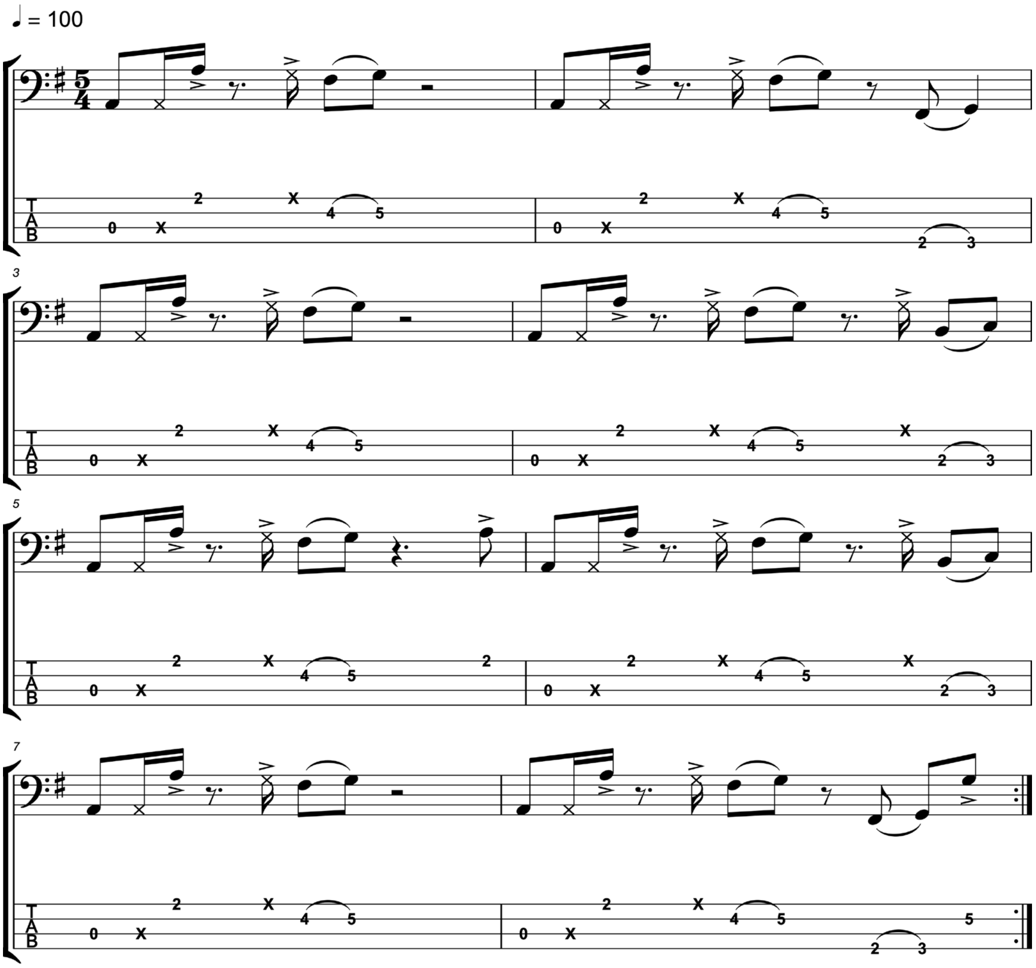
A lot of what we do is dictated by time. How much time we spend with our families, how much time we spend at work, how much free time we have and how much time we spend with our basses in the shed! For most of us, time is at a premium – so when you practise, the division of the time available to you needs care, consideration, structure and planning, in order to achieve all of your goals.

An obsession over slap bass is something that concerns me and continues to raise a red flag whenever I hear students conversing about it. It's not that it's not a worthwhile pursuit, but it potentially distracts from the development of more essential performance skills. Let's see if we can give the technique its due this month.

This month, we'll be expanding on last issue's studies with a further look at 5/4 time measures. Although we'll be attempting to introduce some slap bass technique, notice that its application is within the parameters of a II-V chord progression. Thus, all of the following melodic content can be performed using either a traditional fingerstyle approach, or with the slap technique. Our first exercise targets a minor 7th chord, which naturally resides on the second step of the harmonised G major scale.

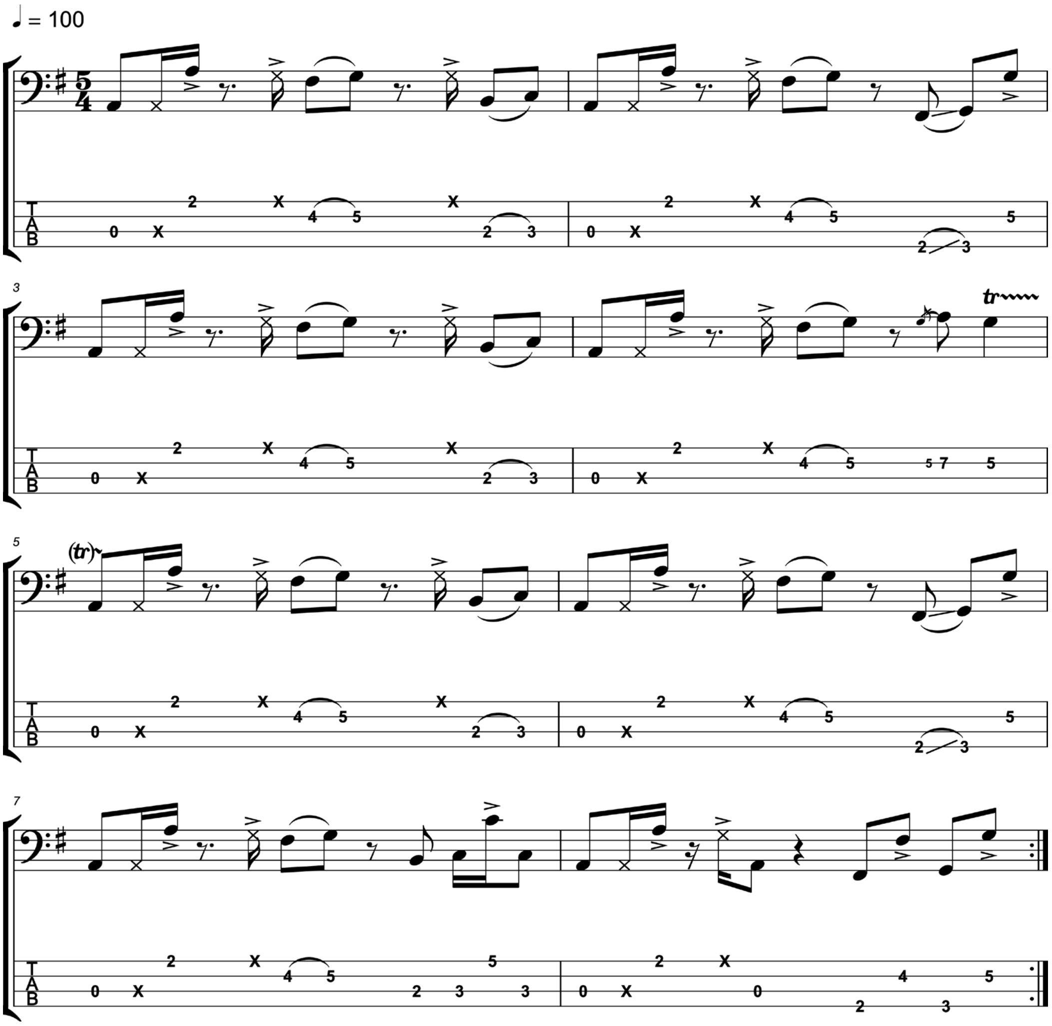
Example 1

You'll notice a number of similarities between the first two of this month's examples, such as the sixteenth-note rhythm on the first beat in both studies. Although this rhythm looks complicated, it's actually fairly straightforward to execute. However, instead of trying to decipher each and every rhythmic component, simply say to yourself the word 'blackcurrant' and then replicate the rhythm in the syllables' delivery. This method can also help you with the rhythm on the third beat in the majority of the measures. In this instance the word 'taxi' serves as a wonderful device.



Example 2

One of the major differences between the first two examples is in the final bar. Here, the 'blackcurrant' rhythm has been succeeded by the pairing of a sixteenth and an eighth note, commencing on the second sixteenth note of beat two.

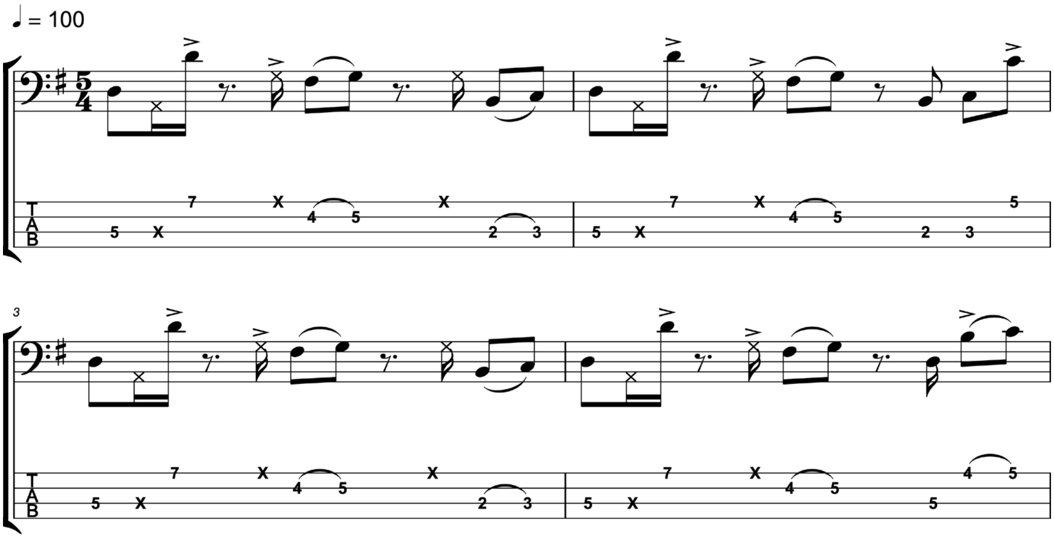


"ALTHOUGH WE'VE SWITCHED CHORD TYPES, IT'S WORTH NOTING THAT THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SPELLING OF A MINOR 7TH AND DOMINANT 7TH CHORD IS THE 3RD"

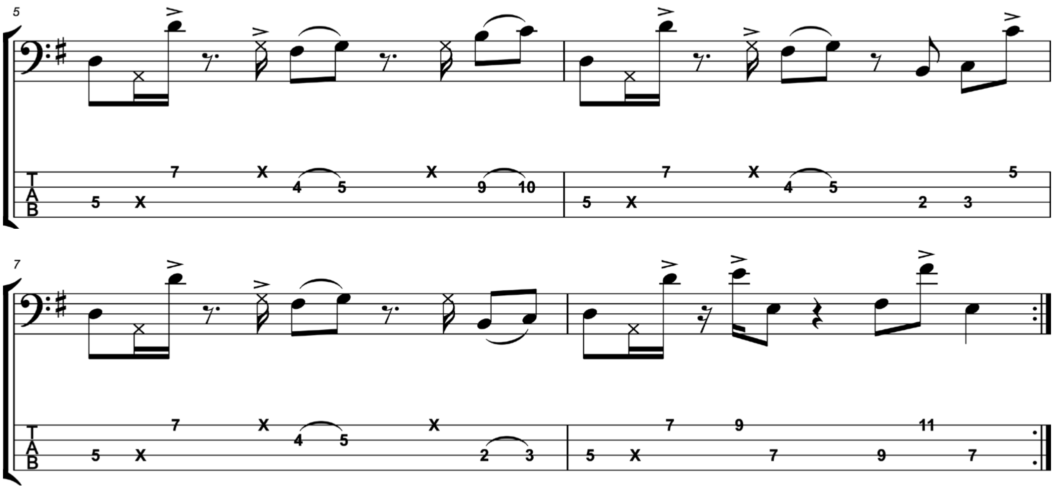
Example 3

Example 3 switches our attention to dominant 7th vocabulary. A minor 7th chord is constructed using the intervals of a root, minor 3rd, perfect 5th and minor 7th. Now, although we've switched chord types, it's worth noting that the only difference between the spelling of a minor 7th and dominant 7th chord is the 3rd.

Notice that the rhythmical subdivisions used in Example 3 are almost identical to those found in Example 2, but the melodic information has been adjusted to suit the new



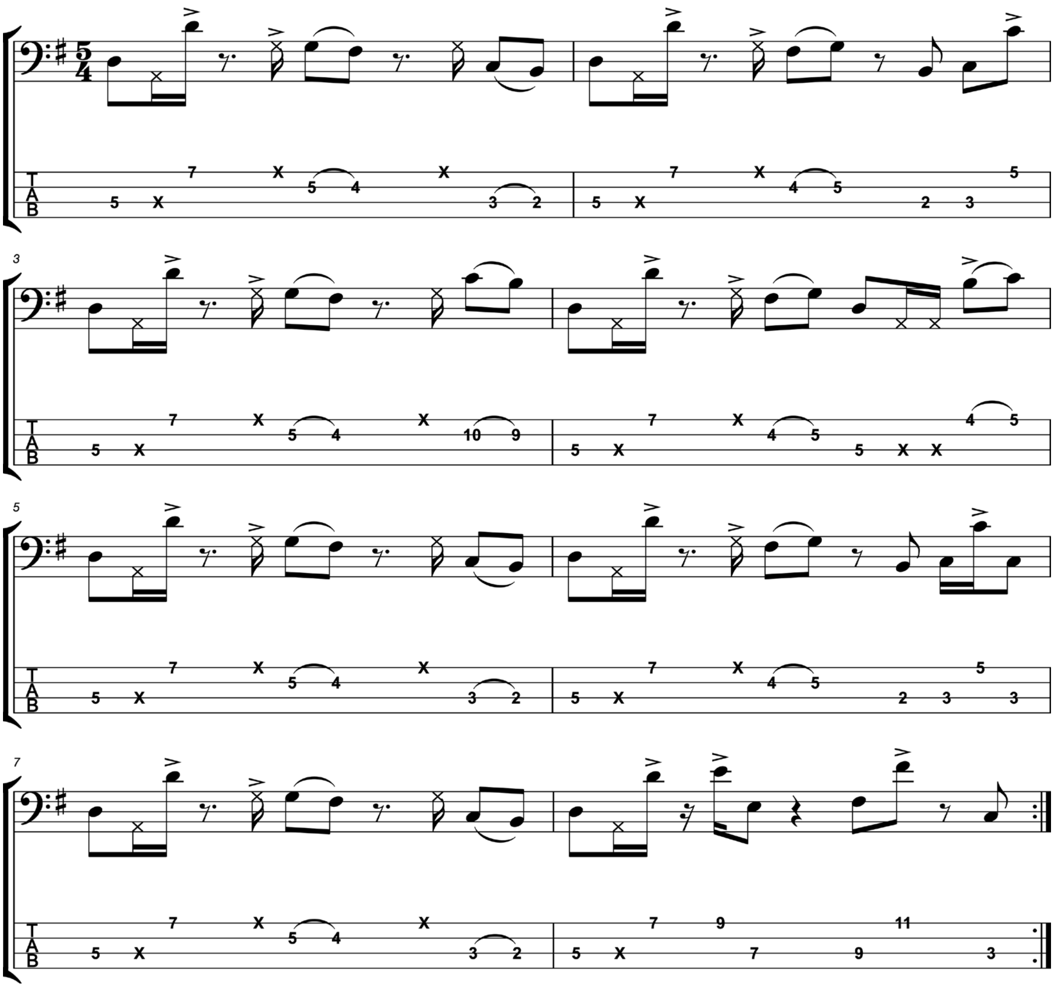
harmonic environment. Once again, the final bar may prove problematic, but it'll only take a few moments of practice to address how the phrase ascends in octaves to the F#, before landing on an E for the end of the bar.



Example 4

Example 4 is our second study of dominant 7th vocabulary. Once again, we'll be enveloping the principal chord tones with an array of diatonic information in an effort to produce a more taxing groove. As you transcend the following measures of 5/4, you'll encounter a number of hurdles such as the physical requirements of playing two sixteenth notes in succession with your thumb in bar four. The rhythm on the final beat of bar six can easily be interpreted by saying 'lemonade'.

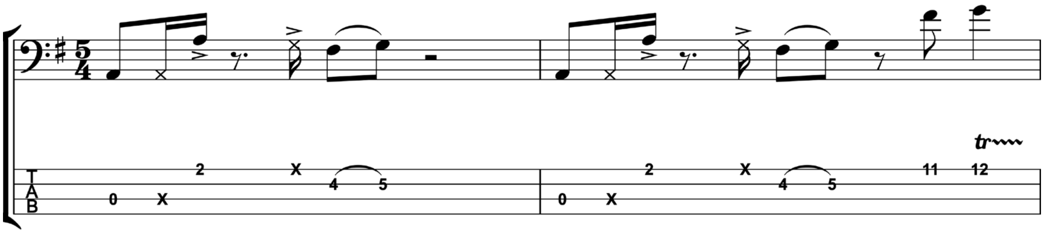
♩ = 100



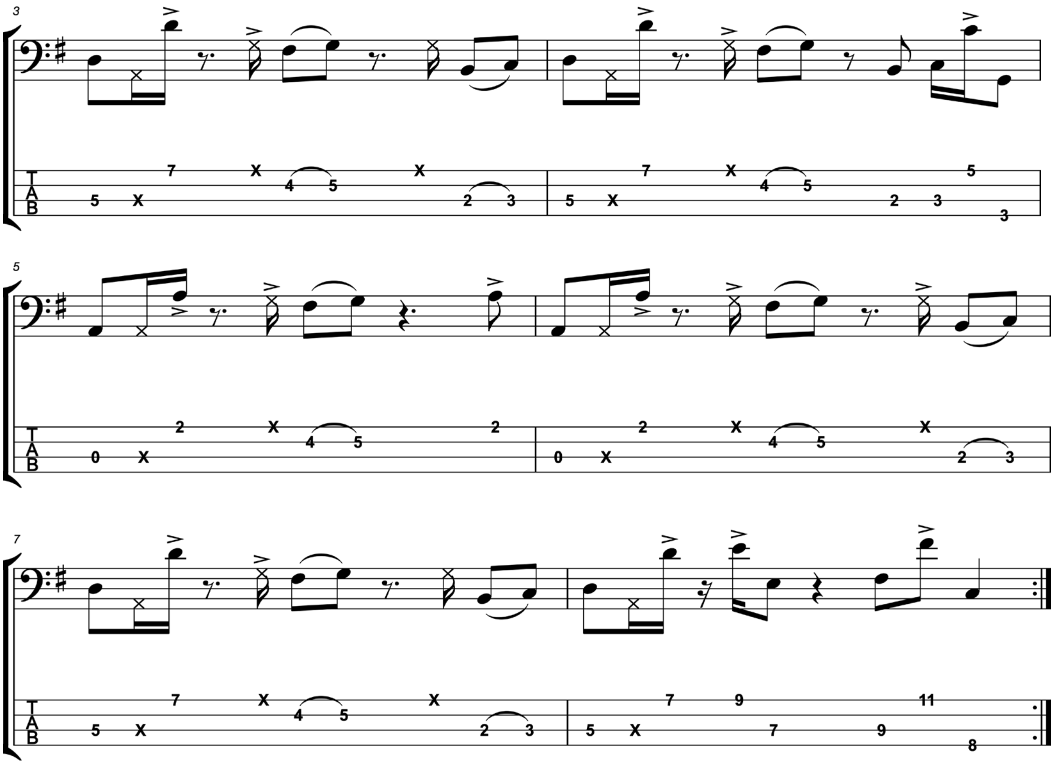
Example 5

In the first four examples we've encountered both minor 7th and dominant 7th chords individually, but in the following eight bars their melodic content has been combined to allow us to move through a II-V chord progression; each chord type is performed for two

♩ = 100

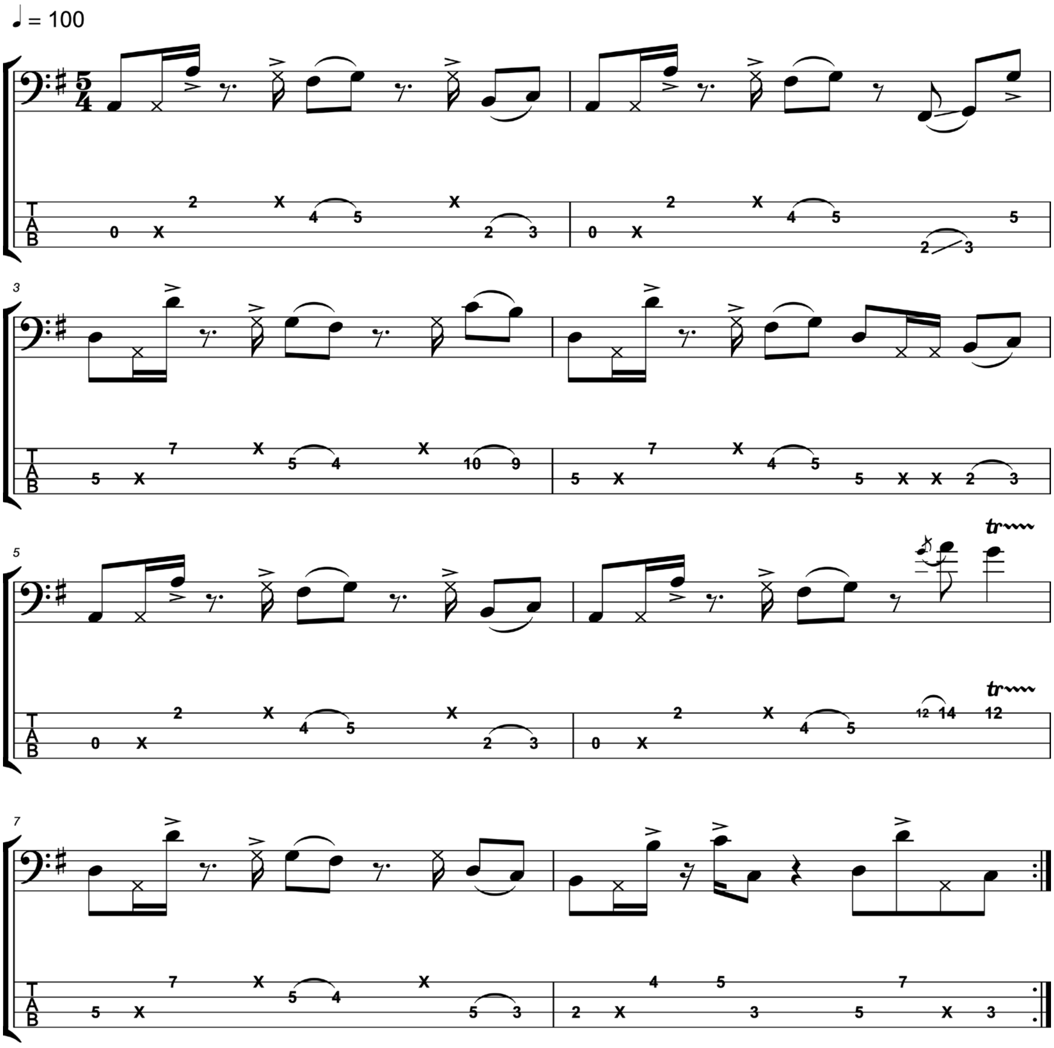


measures. Although many of the rhythmic subdivisions you're going to encounter have been drawn from the previous exercises, there are some important melodic differences.



Example 6

Our explorations have thoroughly explored the key centre of G major, but ensure that you are able to transpose everything you've studied in this month's column into neighbouring keys. Start this process by examining the intervals used in each phrase and then replicating them in a different position of the fretboard. Enjoy working through this final exercise, and I'll see you next time!



MUSIC TRUMP(ET)S WAR

Once upon a time, there was a man with a trumpet. And when he was a soldier in the US Army landing on the beaches of Normandy, he kept it by his side. Once, when he was standing guard at night, his captain told him: "Don't play tonight, there's a sharpshooter out there." But our man thought: "That guy out there is just as scared and lonely as me. I'll play a piece for him." The next day, a POW was brought into the camp, and he asked: "Who is the trumpeter that played 'Lili Marleen' last night? When I heard that song, the war was over for me - I just couldn't use my gun any more." The man with the trumpet was called Jack Leroy Tueller. And though it may sound like a fairy tale, this is a true story. A story only music can write.

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STUART CLAYTON

Advanced Tutorial

Double your impact with bass samurai Stu Clayton's introduction to double stop tapping

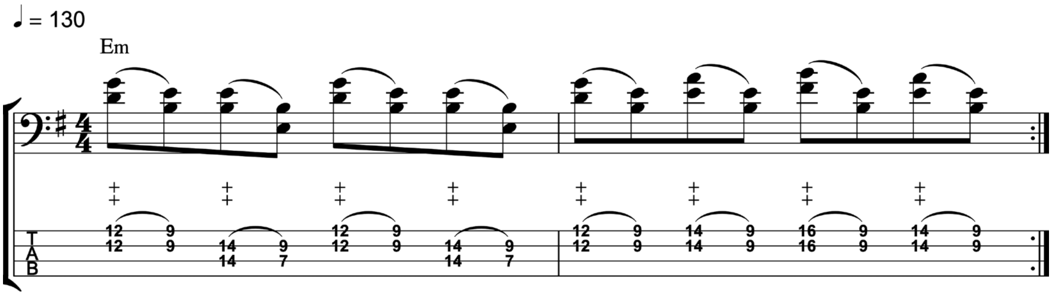
Hello and welcome back to my long-running series on the various forms of the tapping technique. For the past few issues, we've been looking at 'linear tapping', the variant on the technique often favoured by guitarists, which often features long sequences of notes on a single string. Last issue we adapted this technique to be used across all four strings of the instrument, with each tapped note pulled off to sound a note from a chord fretted below. In this month's instalment we're going to continue exploring this idea, but now using tapped double stops.

Tapping Double Stops

A double stop is simply two notes played together. In this month's exercises, the majority of the double stops that we will be tapping will be intervals of a fourth, which means that we'll be tapping two notes on the same fret, on adjacent strings. To do this, we'll be tapping with the first and second fingers of the picking hand simultaneously. Because we're now tapping two notes at once, when we pull off we'll be hearing two chord tones fretted lower on the neck. Let's look at a simple example of this to start with:

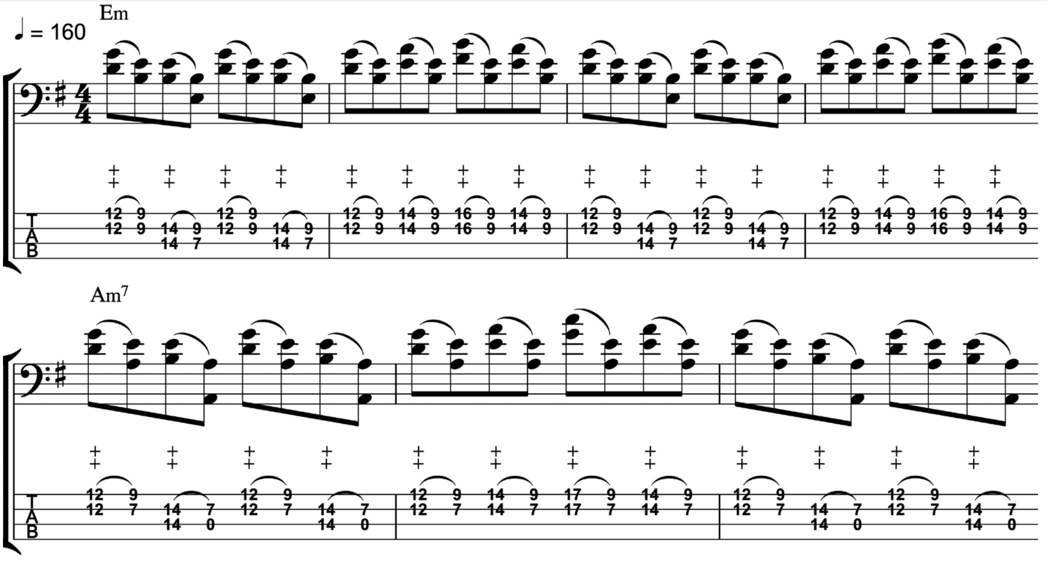
Example 1

Here the fretting hand holds an E power chord: E at the seventh fret of the A string and the B and E at the ninth fret of the D and G-strings. The picking hand is tapping double stops above this, then pulling off to sound the notes below. If you've practised the chordal linear tapping technique in recent issues, this should be no problem.

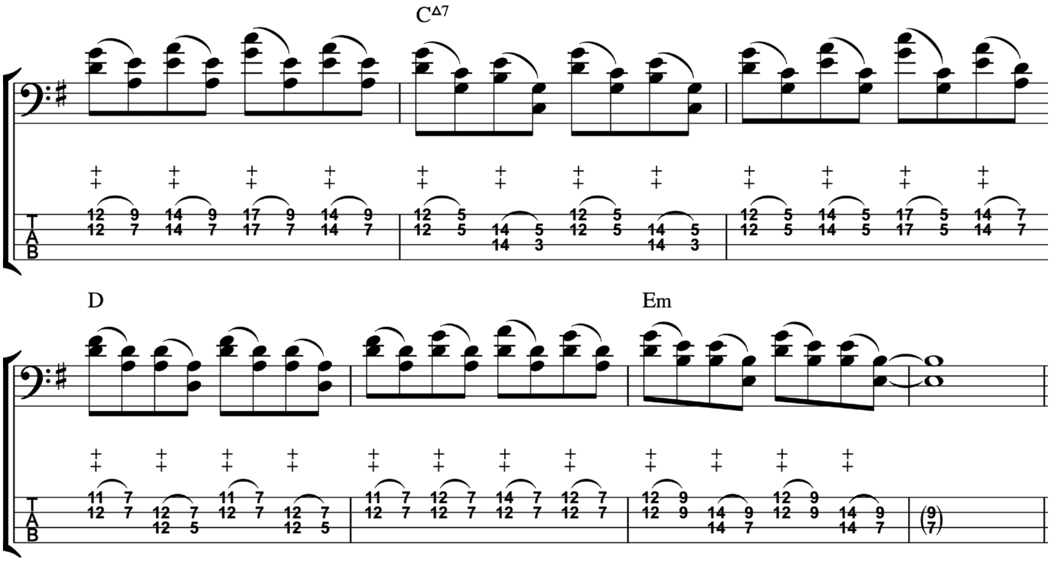


Example 2

This example develops the previous one, but now the fretted chord changes through the course of the line. Note that the tapped double stop line remains the same for most of the exercise, only changing for the D chord. Here, the double stop on the top two strings becomes a major third (D and F#). You can continue to use the same fingers to tap these notes, although you will need to bend your first finger a little. This interval is a little trickier to tap than the fourths used so far, so practise this section slowly to begin with.

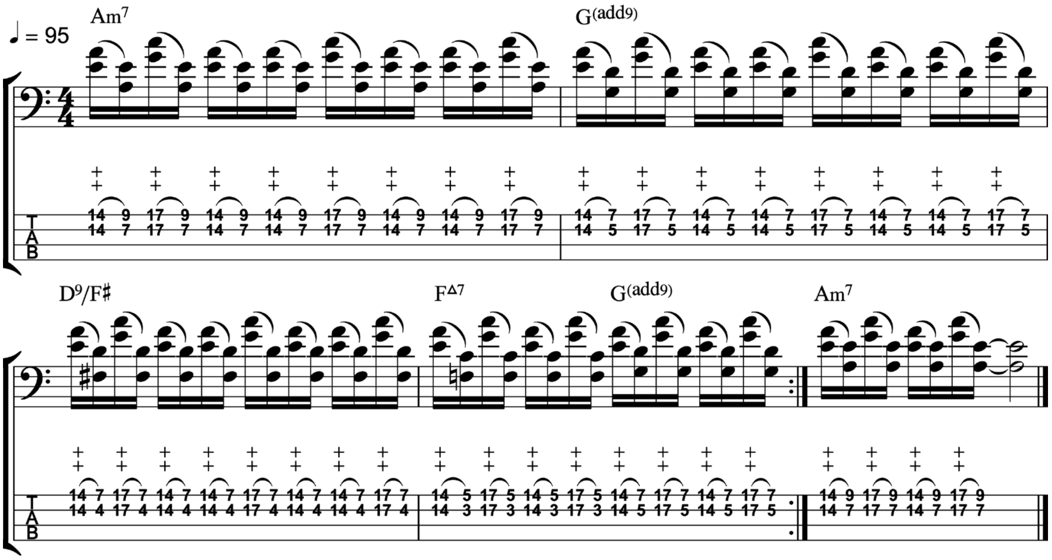


> **"WE'LL BE TAPPING WITH THE FIRST AND SECOND FINGERS OF THE PICKING HAND SIMULTANEOUSLY"**



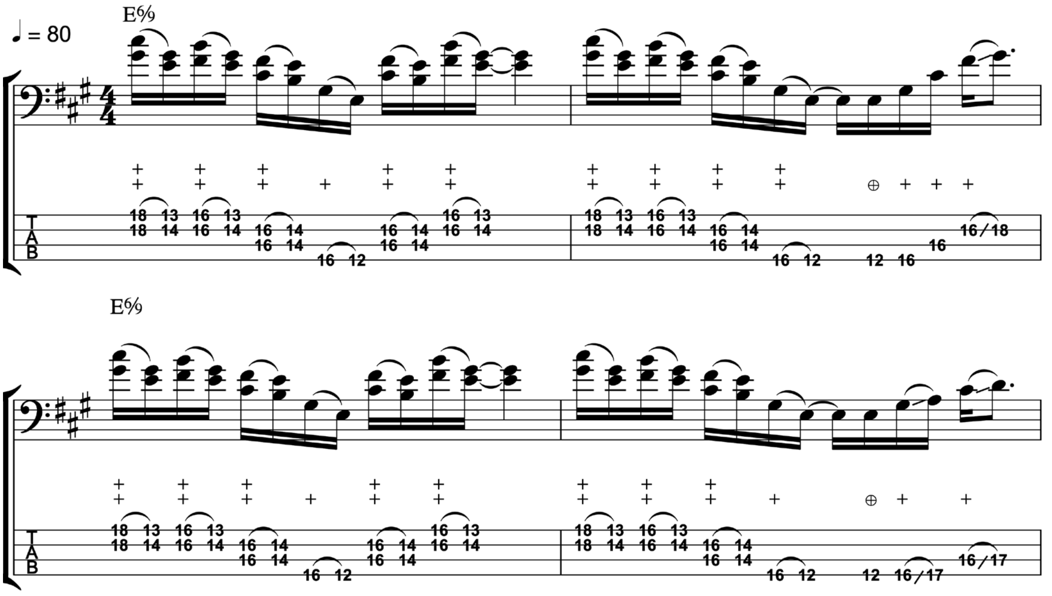
Example 3

In this example the picking hand moves between two double stops: the E and the A at the fourteenth fret of the D and G-strings and the G and the C at the seventeenth fret. Beneath this repeating sequence, the fretting hand holds down a series of different double stop chords.

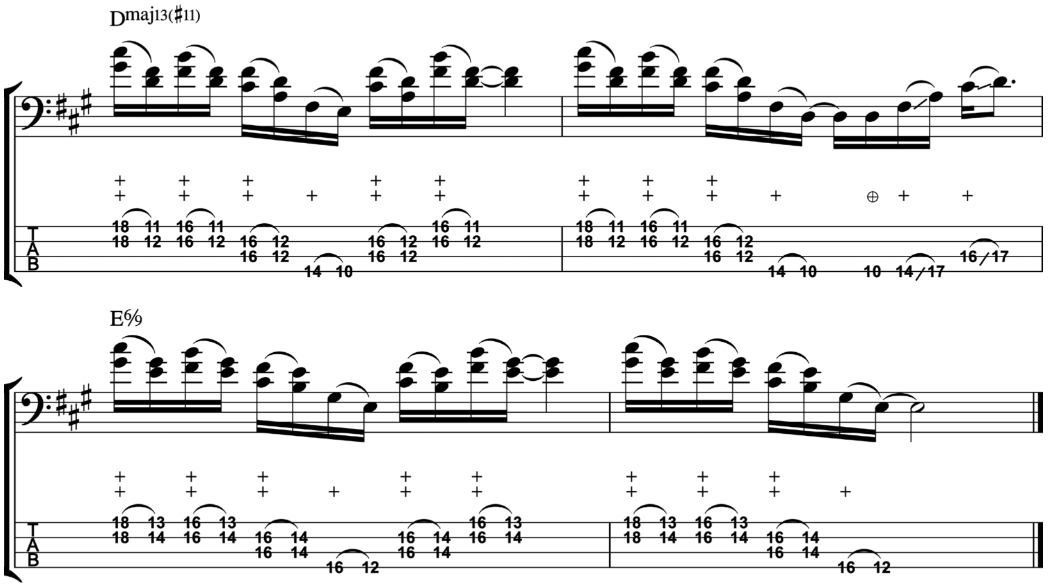


Example 4

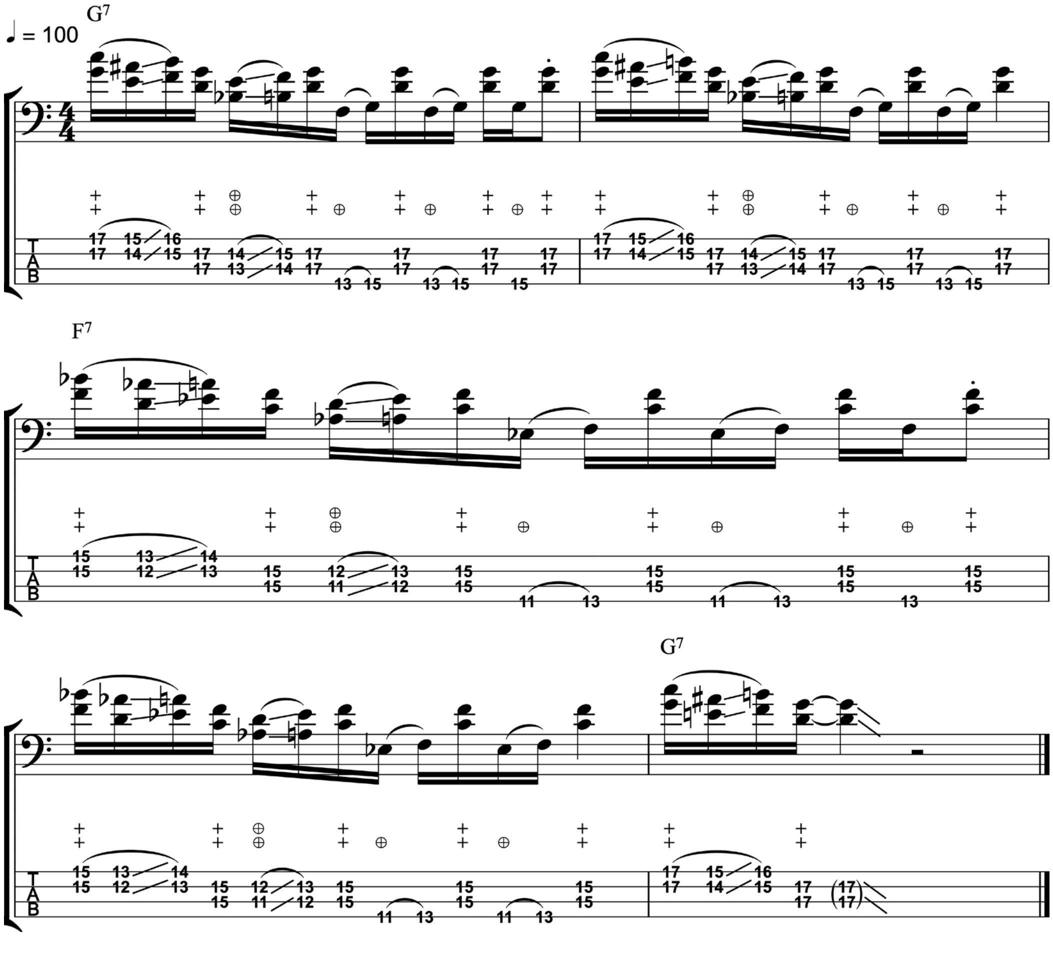
This exercise is similar to the Jeff Berlin composition 'Motherlode'. The fretting hand holds an E chord at the twelfth fret across all four strings. Above this, the picking hand taps double stops, pulling off to sound the fretted chord notes. Some of the tapped double stop notes are extensions – the C# is a major sixth (or thirteenth) and the F# is a major ninth. The result of these added notes is a E6/9 sound. At the end of the two-bar phrase a brief melodic line is tapped between the two hands before the phrase begins again. This idea is then played over a fretted D major chord, with the tapped notes becoming the major seventh (C#), the sharpened eleventh (G#) and the thirteenth (B).



“THIS IS SIMILAR TO THE KIND OF TAPPING LINES THAT VICTOR WOOTEN PLAYS”



Example 5



Here we come across an interesting way to outline a dominant seventh chord with the technique: a double stop G and C are tapped at the seventeenth fret of the D and G strings. These are pulled off to sound the notes fretted below – E and A# -- which in turn are slid upwards to an F and B, the seventh and major third of the G7 chord. This idea is then repeated down on the next pair of strings. The remainder of the bar is a simple two-handed tapping figure which reinforces the tonality of the chord. This bar is played twice and then moved down a tone to outline an F7 chord. This line is similar to the kind of tapping lines that Victor Wooten sometimes plays.

By now you should be comfortable tapping double stop fourths and pulling off to lower, fretted notes. We’re now going to look at some examples that feature a different tapped interval: the octave.

Tapping Octaves

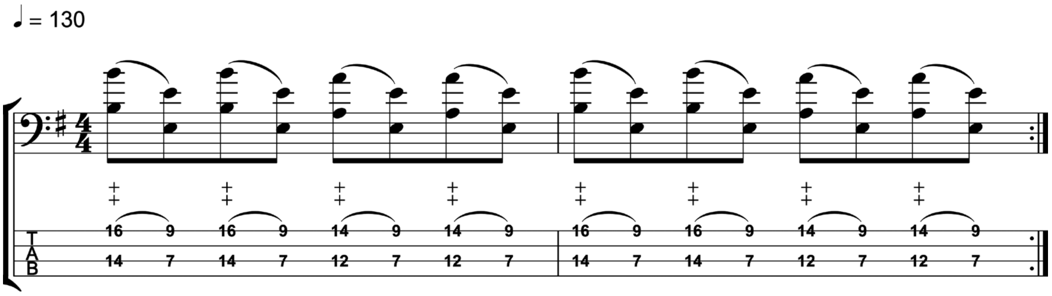
To tap an octave double stop you’ll probably find it easier to use the first and third fingers of your picking hand as we’ll be playing on two non-adjacent strings. Let’s first work on this idea in the context of a simple exercise.

“BY NOW YOU SHOULD BE COMFORTABLE TAPPING DOUBLE STOP FOURTHS AND PULLING OFF TO LOWER, FRETTED NOTES”

Example 6

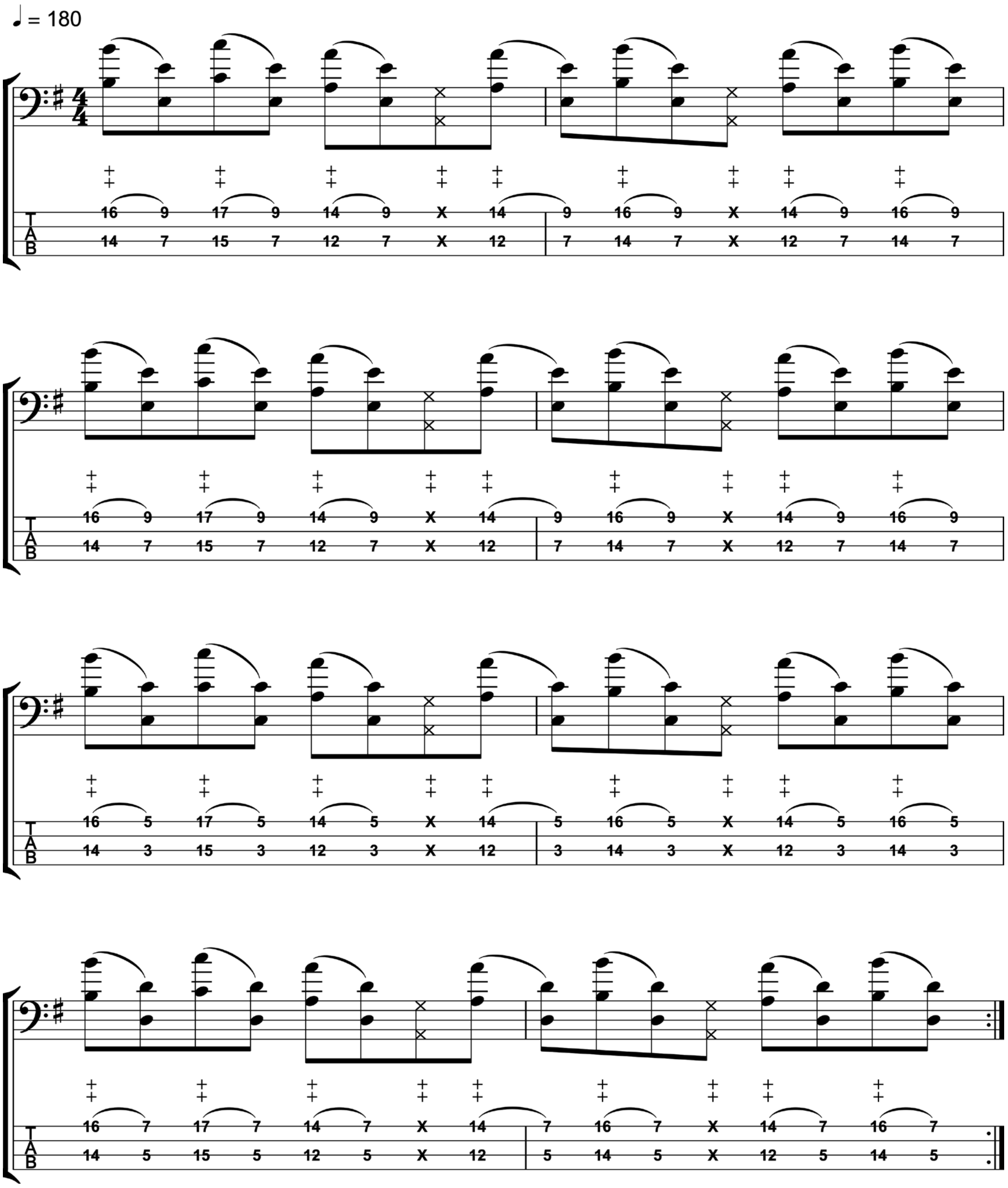
In this example, your fretting hand is holding down a root-octave figure: the E at the seventh fret of the A string, and the octave E at the ninth fret of the G string. Meanwhile, your picking hand is busy tapping octaves in the upper register, first B notes, then A notes. As before, these notes are tapped, then pulled off to sound the lower, fretted notes. The third finger will inevitably be weaker than the second, so you might need to practise this in order to make sure you are consistently and effectively tapping each note at the same volume.

Nailed the basics? Then let's put this new concept to work in a longer exercise.



Example 7

This example uses the same techniques as the previous one but moves a little quicker. The octave notes in the fretting hand also move around. You'll notice that you also need to tap some ghost notes with the picking hand. These are written for rhythmic effect and are played in a slightly different way: when tapping the string, don't push it down so that the notes are heard. Instead, try to 'bounce' off the strings after you've tapped them.



With this month's instalment we're bringing our investigation of the linear tapping technique to a close. We've covered a huge amount of ground over the past few issues, and if you're struggling with any parts of this technique, I recommend going back a couple of issues and working forward from there. All of the examples that we've looked at in this mini-course have been cumulative – that is, each one builds on what has come before.

Okay, that's it for this month. As ever I can be reached via the mag if you have any questions about the column. Next month we'll be delving into the world of... sweep picking and tapping! Until then...

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Marco De Virgiliis

LOW END OF LOVE

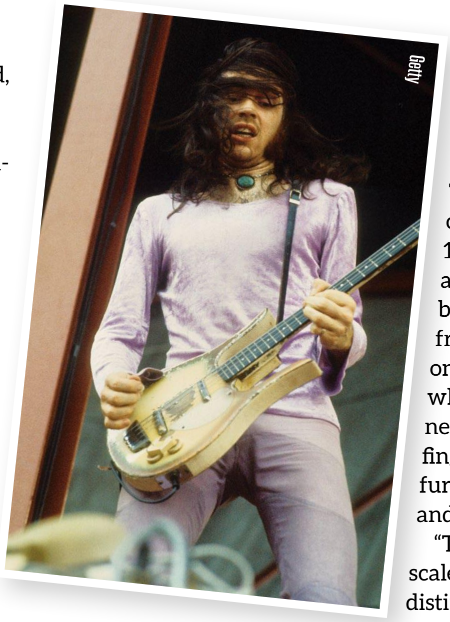
Joe Shooman signs off each issue by celebrating an iconic bass guitar
This month: the Danelectro Longhorn

Instantly-recognisable for its twin-tusked body, the Danelectro Longhorn is one of the quirkier-looking short-scale basses available. The instrument has been a favourite of some huge names, including Bruce Thomas, Phil Lynott, John Entwistle and Noel Redding. Positives for the Longhorn are its full, thumpy-twangy, middy sound, light weight, fun playability and relatively small size, which enables it to travel easily. Set against this is the instruments' inconsistent build quality over the years through various factories, company owners and copyists, plus a fixed bridge and a 24-fret neck that can cause intonation issues, and you've got a rather divisive bass.

Danelectro was formed by former Epiphone engineer Nathan Daniel in 1946, initially building amplifiers for the likes of Sears, which have come back into vogue; Jack White often plays through one. Electric guitars were added in 1954 with a view to making affordable and accessible instruments. Experiments with metal neck reinforcements and a neck micro-tilt followed, and the lipstick pickup reduced noise as the company began its land-grab of the cheaper end of the market. The first six-string electric baritone bass came in 1956, and two years later it gained a double-cutaway longhorn shape, as did the four-string version. Its cheap construction in the initial days was based on Masonite – a wood-fibre moulded board – plus a laminated wood frame and masking tape-style edging. Nat Daniel sold the company to MCA in 1966, and Danelectro subsequently closed its doors in 1969.

One issue with the original Longhorn was its light-gauge strings, which in the late 1950s and through the 1960s were difficult to source, and extremely breakable when you pushed them too far. Famously, our cover star John Entwistle was determined to play the solo on 'My Generation' on his Danelectro, but finding the light strings impossible to to buy, it was easier to splash out on a whole new instrument instead. Even then he snapped through three instruments' worth in a row, so had to revert to a Fender Jazz.

> **"WHETHER MODERN ADDITIONS MAKE A BETTER OR A LESS AUTHENTIC LONGHORN IS AN ONGOING DEBATE"**



The story continued, though, with repairman, designer and luthier Dan Armstrong buying the remaining parts from the shuttered MCA factory and constructing instruments through Ampeg, subsequently using acrylic and plexiglass and veering off into weird and wonderful designs. The Danelectro name was not heard again until 1998, when Evets Corporation bought the rights to it and began production in Korea and China. The '58 reissue was constructed between 1998 and 1999, adding an upgraded adjustable bridge and tuners from 2000 to 2003 on the Longhorn Pro, which featured a maple neck and rosewood fingerboards. There were further reissues in 2006 and 2016.

"This squawky short-scale bass is loved for its distinctive sound," says the official Danelectro website of the iconic instrument. Thanks to the addition of a truss rod, they can now cope with standard-gauge strings, and the pickups have also been tweaked to be more responsive. Whether these modern additions make a better or a less authentic Longhorn is an ongoing debate. As for the build quality question, there's a whole other set of Dano-inspired basses built by Jerry Jones that muddy the waters even more – but that's another article entirely.

In the meantime, just take a look at those pointy volume pots and listen to the distinctive twang and you might just, despite yourself, fall deeply in love.

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